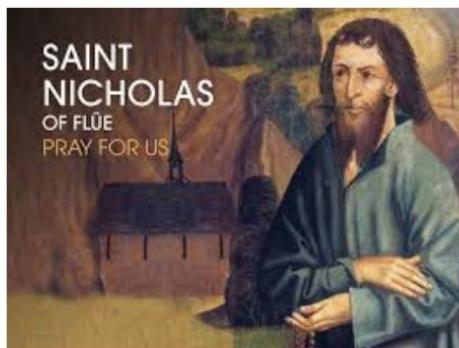




Sacred Paths of Central Europe: A Pilgrimage with Bishop Ralph O'Donnell of the Diocese of Jefferson City, Missouri

September 14 - 26, 2026

Embark on a profound spiritual journey through the heart of Europe, guided by **Bishop Ralph O'Donnell of the Diocese of Jefferson City, Missouri**. This pilgrimage, spanning **September 14 to 26, 2026**, weaves through the sacred landscapes of **Switzerland, Germany, Austria**, and Czechia, inviting pilgrims to deepen their faith amid centuries-old shrines, abbeys, and cathedrals. Rooted in the rich tapestry of Catholic history, each destination echoes the devotion of saints, martyrs, and visionaries, offering opportunities for Mass, reflection, and encounter with the divine. From the venerated Black Madonna of Einsiedeln to the miraculous Infant Jesus of Prague, this itinerary is a living testament to the enduring presence of Our Lady and the Church's heritage in Central Europe. Meals are noted as (B) for breakfast, (L) for lunch, and (D) for dinner, with many lunches on your own to allow personal exploration



Day 1: Monday, September 14 – Departure from Columbia, Missouri
As the sun rises on Columbia, pilgrims gather under **Bishop O'Donnell's blessing** for an overnight flight to Zurich, Switzerland. This marks the beginning of a sacred voyage, much like the ancient pilgrims who traversed Europe seeking spiritual renewal. Rest aboard, preparing your hearts for the holy sites ahead.

Day 2: Tuesday, September 15 – Arrival in Zurich

Touch down at Zurich Airport, where your tour escort awaits to guide you onto a comfortable coach. If time permits, **celebrate Mass at a local church**, invoking the intercession of Swiss saints like **St. Nicholas of Flüe**, the 15th-century hermit and patron of Switzerland renowned for his mystical visions and role in fostering peace amid conflicts. Transfer to your hotel for check-in, followed by a welcoming dinner. **Overnight in Zurich (D)**. Note: The day's schedule may shift based on flight timings, ensuring a smooth start to this faith-filled adventure.



Day 3: Wednesday, September 16 – Excursion to Einsiedeln and Lucerne

After breakfast at the hotel, journey to **Einsiedeln**, a hallowed site where for over a millennium, devotees have flocked to honor **Our Lady of Einsiedeln**. This **Benedictine abbey, founded in 934 by St. Meinrad**, a hermit martyr slain by robbers, houses the revered **Black Madonna—a 12th-century wooden statue of the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child**, darkened by centuries of candle smoke and believed to have miraculous powers. Legends tell of angels consecrating the chapel, and it has drawn Popes, emperors, and countless pilgrims, including **St. Ignatius of Loyola during his spiritual formation**. Enjoy a guided tour of the abbey's opulent Baroque architecture, then **celebrate Mass at the shrine**, offering prayers for grace and healing.

Continue to **Lucerne** for lunch on your own and free time to wander its medieval core, steeped in Catholic history. View the iconic **Spreuer Bridge and Chapel Bridge**, adorned with 17th-century paintings depicting the city's patron saints; **the Lion Monument**, commemorating Swiss Guards who died defending the faith during the French Revolution; **the Town Hall; medieval walls; the Baroque Jesuit Church**, established in 1666 as a Counter-Reformation stronghold by the Society of Jesus; and the Franciscan Church, founded in the 13th century by the Order of Friars Minor, symbolizing the mendicant tradition of poverty and service inspired by St. Francis of Assisi. Return to Zurich for dinner and overnight at the hotel (B, D).



Day 4: Thursday, September 17 – Ascent to Mount Pilatus

Begin with breakfast before driving to **Mount Pilatus** and ascending via cable car, where panoramic views of 73 Alpine peaks and five lakes inspire awe at God's creation. At the summit, reflect on the mountain's legendary ties to **Pontius Pilate, whose spirit was said to haunt its slopes in medieval folklore, though the Church emphasizes redemption over superstition**. Spend time on your own soaking in the vistas, then descend by the world's steepest cogwheel railway to Alpnachstad. After lunch on your own and free time, **celebrate Mass at a local church**, perhaps contemplating the humility of Christ's Passion. This evening, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant outside the hotel, including a glass of wine or beer to toast the day's inspirations. Overnight in Zurich (B, D).



Day 5: Friday, September 18 – Travel to Salzburg with Devotion at Maria Plain

Following breakfast and hotel checkout, embark on a scenic drive to **Salzburg, Austria**, with lunch en route on your own. Enliven your spirits at the **Maria Plain Shrine**, a **Baroque basilica** perched on a hill overlooking the city, where pilgrims venerate a **miraculous image of the Virgin Mary brought from Bavaria in 1673**. This site, a beacon of Marian devotion, has hosted papal visits and is tied to Austria's Catholic resilience during the Ottoman sieges. **Celebrate Mass here, seeking Our Lady's protection**. Continue to Salzburg for hotel check-in, dinner, and overnight (B, D). Be prepared for a longer transfer, allowing time for prayerful contemplation.

Day 6: Saturday, September 19 – Salzburg's Baroque Splendor and the Salzkammergut Lakes

After breakfast, celebrate Mass at a local church. **Tour Salzburg's highlights:** enter the Baroque **Salzburg Cathedral**, dedicated to **Saints Rupert and Virgil, 8th-century missionaries who Christianized the region**, with its grand dome and relics; pass Mozart's birthplace, recalling the composer's devout Catholic faith expressed in his sacred music; view the **Benedictine St. Peter's Abbey, founded in 696** as one of Europe's oldest monasteries, embodying monastic scholarship and prayer; and stroll Mirabell Palace Gardens.

Lunch on your own, then drive through the picturesque **Salzkammergut Lake District to Mondsee**, evoking "The Sound of Music" while visiting **Mondsee Abbey**, a former Benedictine monastery from 748, now a parish church with ties to early Christian evangelization in Austria. Explore film locations amid the serene lakes with your tour escort, all while the soundtrack stirs joyful faith. Return for dinner at a local restaurant outside the hotel. Overnight in Salzburg (B, D).



Day 7: Sunday, September 20 – Silent Night Chapel and Altötting Shrine

Breakfast precedes a drive to the **Silent Night Chapel near Salzburg**, a humble memorial rebuilt in 1937 on the site where Franz Xaver Gruber and Joseph Mohr composed the beloved Christmas carol in 1818 amid post-Napoleonic hardships, symbolizing hope and the Incarnation's peace. Continue to **Altötting in Germany** for lunch en route on your own, then visit the **Gnadenkapelle (Chapel of Grace)**, an octagonal shrine from the 8th century housing the **Black Madonna of Altötting**, a 14th-century limewood statue credited with miracles, including healings during the Black Death. This "Heart of Bavaria" has attracted pilgrims like St. John Paul II and is linked to the Wittelsbach dynasty's Catholic fervor. **Celebrate Mass at the shrine**, drawing on its legacy of intercession. Return to Salzburg for dinner and overnight (B, D).

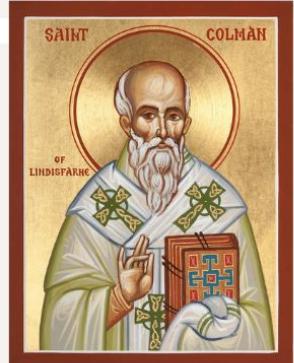


Day 8: Monday, September 21 – Journey to Mariazell

After breakfast and checkout, travel to Styria's **Mariazell Basilica, Austria's national shrine** built between the 14th and 17th centuries in Gothic and Baroque styles. It enshrines the **Magna Mater Austriae**, a 12th-century Romanesque statue of the Virgin carved from linden wood, brought by a monk and famed for miracles, including victories over invading forces through Marian intervention. **Celebrate Mass here**, joining centuries of Austrian devotion. Lunch on your own, then explore the charming town with the afternoon at leisure for personal prayer. Check into the hotel, followed by dinner at a local restaurant outside the hotel, including a glass of wine or beer. Overnight in Mariazell (B, D).

Day 9: Tuesday, September 22 – Melk Abbey En Route to Vienna

Breakfast and checkout lead to a drive toward **Vienna**, stopping at **Melk Abbey**, a majestic Baroque Benedictine monastery founded in 1089 overlooking the **Danube**. Rebuilt in the 18th century, it houses relics of **St. Coloman** and exemplifies monastic life, with its library preserving medieval manuscripts central to Catholic intellectual tradition. **Celebrate Mass amid its grandeur**, reflecting on the Rule of St. Benedict. Lunch on your own, then continue to Vienna for hotel check-in, dinner, and overnight (B, D).





Day 10: Wednesday, September 23 – Vienna's Imperial Catholic Heritage

Breakfast fuels a panoramic tour of Vienna's Ringstrasse, followed by a walk through the Old Town, passing the University, Opera House, Donner Fountain, Belvedere Palace Gardens, Hofburg Palace, Albertina, and Spanish Riding School. Enter St. Stephen's Cathedral, a Gothic masterpiece begun in the 12th century, adorned with 18th-century Baroque altars depicting the stoning of St. Stephen, the proto-martyr whose witness inspires courage in faith. **Celebrate Mass here**, amid its soaring spires symbolizing Austria's Catholic identity under the Habsburgs.

Lunch on your own, then **tour Schönbrunn Palace and Gardens**, the opulent summer residence of the devoutly Catholic Habsburg emperors, where faith intertwined with imperial life. This evening, savor dinner at a local restaurant outside the hotel, including a beverage of your choice. Overnight in Vienna (B, D).

Day 11: Thursday, September 24 – Travel to Prague

After breakfast and checkout, drive to Prague, Czechia, with lunch en route on your own. **Celebrate Mass at a local church upon arrival**, invoking Bohemian saints like St. Wenceslas, the 10th-century duke martyred for his faith. Check into the hotel for dinner and overnight (B, D).



Day 12: Friday, September 25 – Prague's Sacred Wonders

Breakfast precedes sightseeing in the Hradčany Castle district: St. Vitus Cathedral, a Gothic gem started in 1344 housing relics of St. Wenceslas and St. John Nepomucene, martyrs emblematic of Czech Catholicism; the Royal Castle; St. George's Basilica, founded in 920 as one of Bohemia's oldest churches; and the **Church of Our Lady Victorious, Carmelite shrine to the Infant Jesus of Prague**, a 16th-century wax-coated statue from Spain, renowned for miracles and devotion sparked by Princess Polyxena's gift in 1628. Celebrate Mass here, seeking the Child Jesus's blessings.

Cross Charles Bridge to the Old Town: Market Square, Astronomical Clock, Gothic Church of Our Lady before Týn with its twin towers, Wenceslas Square, and Josefov Jewish quarter. Lunch on your own, with the afternoon free for strolling, shopping, or reflection. As a farewell to this pilgrimage, enjoy a farewell dinner at a local restaurant outside the hotel with a folklore show including a beverage of your choice. Overnight in Prague (B, D).

Day 13: Saturday, September 26 – Departure from Prague

Conclude with breakfast and hotel checkout, transferring to Prague Airport for the flight home. Carry the graces of this pilgrimage, renewed in faith by Central Europe's sacred paths (B).





⊕⊕⊕ INCLUDED FEATURES ⊕⊕⊕

- ROUND TRIP AIRFARE
- DAILY BUFFET BREAKFAST & DINNERS
- 11 NIGHTS IN 4-STAR HOTELS
- ZURICH, EINSIEDLN, LUCERN, MT PILATUS, SALZBURG, ALTOTTING, VIENNA, PRAGUE



- DELUXE MOTORCOACH
- PROFESSIONAL TOUR GUIDES
- TRAVEL TYME ESCORT
- HEADPHONES ON TOURS WHERE APPLICABLE
- DAILY MASS AT SHRINES & CHURCHES PER ITINERARY
- TIPS AT HOTELS, RESTAURANTS & GUIDES

NOT INCLUDED: EXTRA BEVERAGES AND MEALS NOT LISTED IN ITINERARY, YOUR OWN PERSONAL ROOM CHARGES TIPS TO IN COUNTRY TOUR MANAGER AND DRIVER(S).

YOU MUST BE ABLE TO WALK AT LEAST 5 MILES PER DAY

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**SACRED PATHS OF CENTRAL EUROPE: A PILGRIMAGE
WITH BISHOP RALPH O'DONNELL OF THE DIOCESE OF
JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI**



SEPTEMBER 14 - 26, 2026

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A PILGRIMAGE WITH BISHOP RALPH O'DONNELL
OF THE DIOCESE OF JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI
SEPTEMBER 14 - 26, 2026



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