

THE MAGAZINE  
OF THE CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE OF  
SAGINAW

Jan./Feb. 2021

# faith *Saginaw*

IN THE KNOW WITH FR. JOE \*  
Is everyone a racist?

FEATURE \*  
Witness to Life:  
How do we help  
moms in need?

FEATURE \*  
Latin Mass community  
has a parish home in  
Saginaw



CATHOLIC SCHOOL  
EDUCATION INITIATES  
*journey into The Catholic Church*



## During Lent we pray for conversion ... for ourselves and for others

I was recently talking with a friend who shared with me the very tragic experience of her mother, who is dying—and has no faith. Her mother has asked to be kept alive as long as possible, using any means possible. She is fearful of death, because she doesn't believe in the hope and promise of eternal life.

It hit me hard to hear details of someone who, nearing the end, is so full of fear and anxiety. It was heartbreaking. I often hear beautiful and inspiring stories of faith; you read about them inside *FAITH Saginaw* (this issue being no exception). It's less often I hear personal stories of people who live without faith.

My friend and her family are praying for a change of heart in their mother/grandmother and an openness to the Lord. Their prayer reminded me of a homily I heard this summer while visiting a retreat center in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The priest described the infinite mercy of Jesus and shared a prayer request he had for all of us. "Please pray for deathbed conversions," he said. "We'll beat the devil at his own game."

In a year which has seen much loss and the tragedy of dying alone, I believe this is a beautiful intention. It is good to be reminded of the need to pray for the conversion of those without faith and those with little or lukewarm faith.

In our prayer this Lenten season, perhaps we ask God if there is someone He would like to reach out to right now ... through us. Let that person know how beloved they are by God, what the Lord is doing in our lives and how He desires closeness with all of his children.

Through our prayers and through our outreach, may we experience conversion in our own lives this Lent, and may conversion also be experienced in the lives of others.

Come Holy Spirit!



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## FEATURES

### 4 BISHOP GRUSS

#### **Lent with St. Joseph**

Following the example of the Church's patron

### 12 FEATURE

#### **COVID-19 stories**

A priest and a patient share their experiences

### 26 FEATURE

#### **'God brought me here'**

Kristin Smith's journey from attorney general's office to leading the Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan

### 28 FEATURE

#### **Diocese welcomes new archivist**

Mark Prindiville looks forward to preserving local Church history



Lola Westphal  
receives her First  
Holy Communion  
from Father Rick  
Bokinskie at St.  
Thomas Aquinas  
Parish in Saginaw.  
Photo by Jeff Schrier.



## Following the example of **ST. JOSEPH**



ILLUSTRATION BY MATT WATTERS



**THE MOST REV.  
ROBERT D. GRUSS**  
*is the seventh bishop  
of the Diocese of  
Saginaw*

**B**y the time this issue of *FAITH Saginaw* magazine reaches your mailboxes, the season of Lent will be upon us. On that first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, the manner in which we received ashes was a bit different this year because of COVID-19 in following the Liturgical Guidelines and Protocols for Resumption of Public Masses. Nevertheless, the meaning in this season of grace has not changed. We are still called to “Reform our lives and believe in the Gospel.”

We turn our eyes to the love and mercy of the Father as we embrace our own call to conversion. Pope Francis reminds us, “Every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father.”<sup>1</sup>

If every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving, the life of St. Joseph can be the lens through which we journey through this season of Lent. St. Joseph can inspire and teach us to live in such a way because his own life reflects this believing, hoping and loving.

Pope Francis decreed the Year of St. Joseph on December 8, 2020 in publishing *Patris Corde* [With a Father's Heart]. This marked the 150th anniversary of *Quemadmodum Deus* by Pope Pius IX, who declared St. Joseph patron of the Catholic

Church. Pope Francis said he was establishing the year so that “every member of the faithful, following his [Joseph’s] example, may strengthen their life of faith daily in the complete fulfillment of God’s will.” During this year we are encouraged to “implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and zeal.”

St. Joseph so often is a man who goes unnoticed. Overall, he lived a discreet and hidden presence. But we also know the incomparable role he played in the history of salvation. He has much to teach us about life, about life’s challenges, about extraordinary love and, lest we forget, about faith. Allow him to be our teacher and guide during this season of Lent.

“*St. Joseph’s simplicity and humility allows his faith to be his guiding light in his participation in the history of salvation.*”

## Believing

Life was not easy for St. Joseph. Imagine facing the dilemma of having to choose between the woman you love and the consequences of an unnatural fatherhood. Imagine the fears. His decision to respond to the message of an angel reveals the deep faith and trust he carried in his heart. Imagine what he must have been feeling as he left on the journey to Egypt with Mary and the newborn Savior to a place unknown because of death threats against his child, again following the message of an angel. Yet Joseph exercised his faith in doing the will of God.

“Even through Joseph’s fears, God’s will, his history and his plan were at work. Joseph, then, teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses. He also teaches us that amid the tempests of life, we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course. At times, we want to be in complete control, yet God always sees the bigger picture.”<sup>2</sup>

St. Joseph’s faith could not be shaken in spite of the darkness of the unexpected events in his life. His simplicity and humility allow his faith to be his guiding light in his participation in the history of salvation. St. Joseph has much to teach us about faith this Lenten season.

## Hoping

When writing about hope, St. Thomas Aquinas reflected that it is born from the desire for something good that is “difficult but possible to attain.” If we can easily get what we want, there is no need for hope. If we embark upon something and already know the ending, there is no need for hope. “As a gift of the Spirit, hope is both an anchor (cf. Heb. 6:18-19) giving us security amid the storms of life, and a ‘sail’ driving us forward towards the safe harbor of eternal life.”<sup>3</sup> These words from Pope Francis reflect the life of St. Joseph as he faced the storms of his own life with Mary and Jesus.

He had to abandon everything and provide for his family in whatever way necessary as they journeyed to Bethlehem, to Egypt and finally to Nazareth. In every story in which Joseph played a role, it always ended with him getting up, taking the child and his mother and doing what God commanded him. Not only does St. Joseph show us his faith, but also the virtue of hope that was prevalent in his life. St. Joseph can teach us about hope in this season of grace.

## Loving

One can tell how much they love someone by the sacrifices they make for the other. In the events of St. Joseph’s life of which we are aware, what is shown is a deep love for God revealed through his surrender to the will of God. It was his deepest desire. The sacrifices he made for his beloved spouse express a deep love beyond all telling. “In St. Joseph, Mary experienced a perfect reflection and mirror of God’s love for her.”<sup>4</sup>

And of course, the whole of his fatherhood expresses the love that only a father could experience. Though Joseph was entrusted with the care of Jesus, the Son of God, his encounters with Jesus were those of a normal father. But he also had the privileged place of adoring Jesus. In the words of St. Peter Julian Eymard, “When we see how close Joseph came to Jesus, how thoroughly he was transformed into him, we grasp his true greatness, his real sanctity. We find in him [St. Joseph], the perfect adorer, entirely consecrated to Jesus, working always near Jesus, giving Jesus his virtues, his time, his very life; it is thus that he is our model and our inspiration.” St. Joseph can teach us this love.

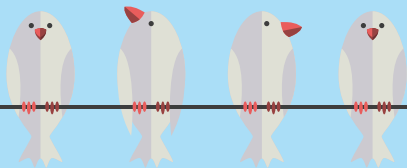
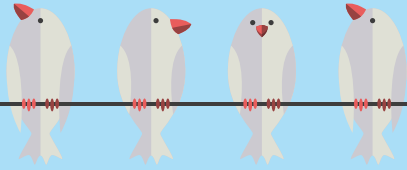
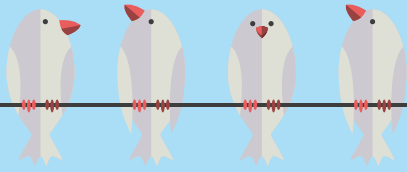
Who could be a better spiritual guide for us during this Lenten season? The Year of St. Joseph also provides the opportunity for Catholics to receive a plenary indulgence by reciting any approved prayer or act of piety in honor of St. Joseph, especially on March 19, the saint’s solemnity, and May 1, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. Have a blessed Lenten season! †

1 Pope Francis, 2021 Lenten Message

2 Pope Francis, *Patris Corde*, #2

3 Wednesday General Audience, St. Peter’s Square, Rome, May 31, 2017

4 Donald H. Calloway, MIC, *Consecration to St. Joseph, The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father*; page 133



## DEAR FR. JOE: IS EVERYONE A RACIST?

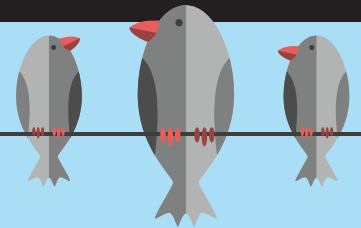


Illustration modified from Getty Images/Dmitri\_L\_Guzhavin

Q

**Things are so much better than they were; I don't understand all the talk about racism. My priest said that everyone is racist, and I think that's nuts. What am I supposed to do about it anyway?**

A

Wow — things are crazy, aren't they? The madness of our present age can be scary and worrisome, but I would love for us to think about it as an invitation for each and every person reading this to think about racism and Christianity.

One of the first things I think we need to do is to take a moment to divorce this issue from politics. As much as both parties would love to frame this in such a way as to continue to rip us apart, the actual discussion and necessary transformation should occur in each of us outside of what we want to be true, what we hope is true or what our political “leaders” tell us.

Introspection is key to this, I believe. Our lives are filled with noise, and the noise only increases our sense of helplessness and indignation. It's important that we take time to look deep in our hearts, not for the answers that keep us comfortable or reaffirm our ideology, but for answers that will help us become more like Christ.

Here's what I am learning in my reflections on racism, where I participate in racism and what I can do about it.

The first thing I recognized was that my standard was too low. I know for a fact I'm not in the KKK, I don't use racist words and I try to serve everyone God gives me to serve. As I took time to contemplate, I realized that that's a nice human standard, but not a good Christian one.

I need to be holy. I need to be like Christ. For that to happen, I can allow no room in my heart for anything but love, faith and hope. It's not enough to not be bad, I must embrace and pursue goodness itself. Any darkness I allow in my heart will not simply stay in that one place, it will grow. Sin doesn't stop naturally; it stops because of divine grace and a commitment in our hearts.

So, I need to let Jesus walk me through my heart and see where I have allowed anything in my heart that judges a person based on their race:

- *Do I make internal judgements about someone because they look different than me?*
- *Do I sit by quietly when people make racist comments or jokes?*
- *Do I believe that God created the different races intentionally?*
- *Do I hold people who look like me to a different standard than people who don't look like me?*
- *Am I suspicious of people who do not look like me?*



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This is obviously not an exhaustive list; I only intend to offer some guiding principles. In the end, God wants each of us to open our hearts to his light so that we allow no stain of sin in there. Don't be defensive, be open.

What if I find racism in my heart? Well, it's actually pretty easy: repent and accept God's mercy! This is the heart of the Christian life — we let God guide us through the process of conversion so that we become more like him. We shouldn't be surprised to find sin in our hearts; we should be surprised and overjoyed at how effectively God uses us right in the midst of our sinfulness.

I am growing in friendship with a wonderful Christian minister who is Black. He has, in his words, offered me a place of "grace and truth." In that space, he helps me grow without being angry that I need growth. He lets me ask questions and helps me hear his answers so that it is not I, a white person, judging whether racism exists or is "as bad as they say," but a Christian brother, walking me through his experiences and helping me grow. Slowly, my eyes are opening and frankly, my heart is breaking sometimes. I am grateful to God for him.

Finally, let's not let the extremists define us. Let's not allow the agenda-oriented to define reality for us. I think most people are not at the extremes; they either think racism is not a big deal because they've never experienced it or believe it is omnipresent because they experience it too often.

To me, the key is this: Do my brothers and sisters who are different than me find, in me, a person who loves them as God's children? Do I offer them a place where their appearance and/or cultural traits are known as a gift?

In the end, I invite us to remember that, when St. John the Apostle was given a vision of heaven, he saw people "of every race, tribe and tongue" there. This image is used in Scriptures often; when God speaks of the joyous future, it always involves many nations, races, tribes and tongues.

As Christians, Jesus wants us to be his presence on earth. Let's accept that challenge and pray the Holy Spirit guide us into being men and women who reject racism, fight racism and stand for the dignity of every human being. †

## Build a house in our Hearts

**T**he first disciples, Andrew and his brother, Simon, called out, "Rabbi," (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?"<sup>1</sup> Jesus' response: "Come, and you will see."

"He showed them where he was staying; they came and were with him. What a happy day they spent, what a happy night! Who is there who can say to us what they learned from the Lord? Let us also build and prepare in our heart a house where he may enter in and teach us and converse with us."<sup>2</sup>

St. Augustine muses about this joyful encounter with the Lord. The first apostles reflect, "Let us also build and prepare in our heart a house where he may enter in and teach us and converse with us."

The Gospel according to St. Mark describes the calling of the first apostles in a slightly different way. Andrew and his brother Simon were casting their nets into the sea. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."<sup>3</sup> Mark prefaces the calling of the first apostles by referring to the arrest of John the Baptist. John the Baptist's proclamation of the Messiah would end in John's martyrdom.

Jesus calls us to follow, to "build and prepare in our heart a house where he may enter in and teach us and converse with us." Our Lord's call may be an interior, subtle whisper in an experience of external chaos, as Andrew and Simon, later named Peter, would have experienced.

We are living in a time of turbulence and perhaps are waiting for a false peace before reaching out to the Lord. Hope for the acceptance of peers or family members can delay an individual in returning to the Church or seeking completion of the sacraments or even participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Perhaps the false judgment of *not being good enough* prevents an individual from following the Lord. Distractions in a world caught up in upheaval can also be a burden to some.

I have been thinking recently about preparing in my heart a house where Jesus may enter. Our Lord calls without insult or harsh criticism of individuals. Isn't his example important at this time, when we experience sometimes ruthless defamation of individuals in the public sector?

The Lord simply invites. Do I want a relationship with the Lord? To converse with the Lord? To find the peace that only he can give? †

1 John 1:38 | 2 St. Augustine, Homily on John 7.9.3 | 3 Mark 1



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# SIBLING RIVALRY?

## How to keep a balance



Illustration by Getty Images/SpicyTuffel

### **“Am I my brother’s keeper?” (GEN 4:9)**

Sibling rivalry is as old as Cain and Abel, and I think that’s about how long parents have been trying to find the best way to deal with it! There can be some positive outcomes from sibling rivalries and conflicts; in fact, they are some of the earliest experiences we have in learning to compromise, negotiate and problem-solve. But sometimes the rivalries can spin to a level of concern, so here are some strategies to help keep a balance.

- **Create situations where siblings support and help each other.** Helping with anything from sight words to shoe-tying to throwing the perfect spiral gives siblings the chance to work together, share talents and build empathy as they help each other progress from struggle to success.

- **Celebrate instead of compare.** Children need to know they are loved and appreciated for who they are. Comparing one child to another only intensifies the rivalry and creates division. It can be easy for children to think better grades or more home runs equals more love and approval. It’s important to celebrate accomplishments and achievements of all kinds, and siblings need to celebrate, too. An occasional appearance at a sibling’s event is a simple show of support that has a big impact.

- **God’s plan for families is to support and love each other,** so creating an atmosphere where family is the most important thing will help balance rivalry. If you

teach your kids that nothing is more important than family, it becomes easier to identify the things that can cause rivalry and undermine family unity. Conflict and rivalry are bound to be a part of family life, but kids need to know that family trumps everything.

- **“Lift-ups” follow “put-downs.”**

Sibling honesty often feels like a put-down, so every time a sibling spits out a put-down, he or she needs to offer a comment or action that lifts their sibling up.

- **Siblings are a gift,** and children need to be taught that they are indeed their brother’s and sister’s keeper, and they have a responsibility to pray for their siblings and desire their holiness. When rivalries intensify, taking time to help them look at their siblings through the eyes of the Father, recognizing the gifts and talents God gave them, can restore peace. †



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# WHY DO I WORK?

**W**e are soon approaching the one-year mark in this pandemic. It has been a long haul. Some have not been to church for almost a year now; some have not participated in the activities they were used to or seen those they were accustomed to seeing. Certainly, one of the profound effects of the pandemic has been on how we work. Business travel is down and many have found themselves meeting virtually. I have heard stories of kids making guest appearances in their pajamas during a video call or of another playing the xylophone right outside the room where dad was on a call. Many of you can recount similar humorous experiences. Some have even found that, while they may be less efficient, it has brought about a greater sense of peace and fulfillment in one's work in being closer to family.

Pope Francis has declared this year a “Year of St. Joseph” to commemorate the 150th anniversary of him being declared patron of the Church. He also did it as a way of honoring all the countless men and women who have served us during the pandemic, often in unseen and unsung ways. This made him think of St. Joseph, who is so important to the story of salvation history and yet never utters a single word in all of Scripture. What is something we can learn from him? St. Joseph is the patron saint of workers because he works with Jesus and for Jesus.

St. John Paul II honored the workers of the world in 1981 by writing a whole encyclical on work, in which he called for a renewal in a “spirituality of work,” by seeing it as a participation in the creative and redemptive work of God in the world. As we reflect on how the pandemic has impacted how we work, perhaps we can learn from St. Joseph in seeing how the Gospel impacts our work—whether that work is one's schoolwork, one's employment or the very important work of raising one's family, with all the loving labor that entails. Few things can transform our experience of work more than working with Jesus and for Jesus.

What are some things to keep in mind in developing this spirituality of work?

First, think of your desk, workshop, cubicle, etc., as an “altar,” in which you can say to the Lord, “This is my body given for you.” This can transform the experience of the ringing alarm clock on a Monday morning into an act of love for God. Love transforms everything.

Second, involve your kids in your work in some way. Do not just help them with theirs, but involve them in yours. A father building a table might be able to do so more quickly without his child helping, but in letting his child hold the wood or drive in a screw, the father is building not only a table, but also communion with his son or daughter. Part of the modern disillusionment with work stems from the radical separation of home and work, something

“The Lord wants us to be participators with him in building something beautiful in the world.”

we take for granted but is really novel in the history of the world. Are there simple ways to bring them into what you do? After all, this is what the Lord does with us. He wants us to be participators with him in building something beautiful in the world.

Third, remember the importance of rest and celebration. Do not forget that on the seventh day the Lord rested. He was not tired. He does this to teach us the centrality of worship and union with him. The word “liturgy” means “work of the people.” Participation in the Sunday Mass remains our most important “work,” for no activity is greater than receiving God, no labor more vital than building communion with God and one another. †



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Father Christopher Coman celebrates the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite at Holy Family Church in Saginaw. The Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite is celebrated with the priest facing the same direction as the congregation, usually eastward or ad orientem.

## Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite Mass offering *returns to Saginaw*

Father Christopher Coman celebrated the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite (Latin Mass) at Holy Family Church in Saginaw on Gaudete Sunday, Dec. 13, the first of what organizers hope will be a regular offering for the faithful.

"I hope this will be welcome news to the faithful of our diocese who are nourished by the Extraordinary Form of the Mass," said Bishop Robert Gruss, who preached the homily.

Father Coman, pastor of St. Christopher Parish of Caro and Mayville, received special training to celebrate the Extraordinary Form, which includes prayers in Latin and offering the Eucharistic sacrifice facing the same direction as the congregation.

"Many worshippers, including me and my family, are drawn to this beautiful liturgical preference," said Joey Storer, president of the Saginaw Latin Mass Association, an organization dedicated to promoting and sustaining the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite in the Diocese of Saginaw.

"People are often drawn to the Gregorian chant, extended periods of silent prayer, more frequent use of incense and other





PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY JEFF SCHRIER

(Left)  
A young  
worshipper  
prays  
during the  
Extraordinary  
Form of the  
Roman Rite.

(Right)  
Father  
Christopher  
Coman  
celebrates the  
Extraordinary  
Form of the  
Roman Rite at  
Holy Family  
Church in  
Saginaw  
on Gaudete  
Sunday, Dec. 13.

Bishop Robert  
Gruss preaches  
the homily at  
Holy Family  
Church in  
Saginaw.

“Many worshippers,  
including me and  
my family, are  
drawn to this  
beautiful liturgical  
preference.”

- JOEY STORER

aspects of the Mass, which some find very helpful in orienting them towards prayer and thanksgiving,” Storer said. “My teenage sons are very drawn to the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Mass. We don’t always know why this Mass is attractive to the youth but we see many young charismatic youth and young large families at these Masses.”

Holy Family Church in Saginaw has been identified as the location for the celebration of the Extraordinary Form and the hope is to eventually offer Mass there each week in both the Ordinary Form and the Extraordinary Form. All those who plan to regularly attend the Extraordinary Form of the Mass will be encouraged to join the Holy Family Parish community.

“From the beginning, in my talks with the leadership community of the Saginaw Latin Mass Association, I expressed my strong desire for the group to

become part of the Holy Family Parish community,” Bishop Gruss said. “I don’t simply want to provide a home that is used and not supported ... that would cause a fracture in the Body of Christ. Rather, I would like to see one united parish community which offers two different opportunities for the celebration of Eucharist.”

Father Prentice Tipton serves as pastor of Holy Family Parish and celebrates Mass there each week. Several priests from the diocese who are trained will celebrate the Extraordinary Form on a rotating basis.

In addition to Father Coman, Father Marcel Portelli, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Gladwin; Father Nate Harburg, pastor of Good Shepherd Parish in Ubyly; and Father Thai Nguyen, chaplain at St. Francis Home, have also expressed interest in celebrating the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite. †

Father José María Cabrera, pastor of All Saints Parish in Bay City, has ministered to COVID-19 patients since March. The Oil of the Sick is placed in a small oil stock to bring to the hospital.

# ANOINTING OF THE SICK DURING THE PANDEMIC

BY FATHER JOSÉ MARÍA CABRERA, PASTOR,  
ALL SAINTS PARISH, BAY CITY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF SCHRIER

**I** have ministered to the sick with COVID-19 (and with other conditions) since March. This ministry fell on me by default since I am the youngest priest in the Bay City area.

I have anointed people from their 40s to their 90s. For the most part, I have been called to anoint the dying. The majority are very sick patients on ventilators; only a few recovered.

I cannot deny that every time I get called, I always think as I walk into the unit, "Will today be the day, Lord, that I contract the virus?" So far that day has not arrived. I have been tested for

COVID-19 five times with nasal swabs and one time for antibodies. All negative. Part of me wishes I already had the virus so that I can move on with life.

I have been called to the hospital pretty much every week since April. Sometimes multiple times a week, and on a couple of occasions multiple times a day. Gowning up for each room is exhausting. I don't know how the nurses get the energy to do that so many times a day on top of their regular duties.

Since a priest is only allowed inside the hospital for the dying, I have not been able to visit parishioners who were not near death or suffering from conditions other than COVID-19. A Rosary prayed in the parking lot was the best I could offer for them.

The most difficult thing is to keep my distance from the people back at the parish. Many times, people get in proximity with me not knowing that just hours before, I had been with a person

with COVID-19. Sometimes when I am at Mass, in the confessional or at the office doing the regular duties of a diocesan priest, the doubt would come: "What if I already have the virus? What if I am asymptomatic? Am I spreading it?" You truly become a modern leper and you want to ring the bell of social distancing to keep everyone safe from you. It took me a while to get rid of these thoughts.

## Sacred spaces

Entering these hospital rooms is entering into a sacred space that only few can experience. In many cases, I became the window of information for the outside world where relatives eagerly want to hear a verbal description of how their loved one is doing. In other instances, relatives have given me rosaries, holy cards and scapulars to place them near their loved one as I enter the room - these sacramentals have become a "virtual presence" for the relatives who are not able to get inside.



Many people are dying alone.

The power of the Oil of the Sick is beyond our understanding. The word “Christ” means “anointed.” These people whose bodies were completely taken over by the virus still keep the dignity of a Christian. They are “alter Christus” or “other Christs,” because they are also “anointed” with the oil of healing and salvation.

Since the middle of April, I have been allowed to enter the rooms if I wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) which the Bay City hospital and/or nursing homes normally provide.

Early on, when I was not allowed inside the COVID-19 rooms, I could only pray from the hallway. In this manner I technically could not anoint the sick, but I was able to pray the Litany of the Saints, the Apostolic Pardon and Commendation of the Dying.

### Power of prayer

This ministry cannot be done without the support of people's prayers. I have a small group of friends who pray for me every time I enter the COVID-19 units. Also, a faithful companion in prayer has been Fr. Steve Fillion, a priest in residence at All Saints Parish. He composed a prayer that can be used by healthcare workers. Every time I go into the hospital, I leave multiple copies of the prayer at the nurses' stations. The parish Prayer Line prayer warriors are always praying for my safety.

Nurses are stressed and tired. From time to time, I exchange words with them and assure them of the prayers of the Church. One nurse described her feelings as “We are numb, Father. Each day is like the same day repeated over and over since March.” The nurses are exposed to these patients for 12-hour shifts. A five- to 10-minute anointing is not much of a sacrifice compared to what these healthcare workers do for these patients. They truly care.

### No one is a number

By now pretty much every resident in Bay County knows someone by name who contracted the virus, who either

recovered from it or died because of it. The pandemic is no longer something far away from us. It's no longer “China, Italy, New York or even Detroit.” It's right here among us.

In the news we see numbers of new cases. At the hospital or nursing homes, I don't see numbers; I see persons: someone's mother, someone's grandfather, a brother, a sister, a friend with a name. I have to mention their name as I say the prayers of the Church. “I have called you by name,” says the Lord. And I must say, of those who died after these powerful encounters, I cannot wait to see them again in the Kingdom where there is no suffering or pain.

On the evening of the fourth Sunday of Advent, the Bay County Health Department informed me that I had been nominated for the reception of the Pfizer vaccine as a frontline responder. I would have never imagined that I would be considered among the first groups of people to be vaccinated.

This only reveals that spiritual care is crucial in any healthcare system. We are

not just bodies, we are persons – body and soul – created by the love of God and we come from God and we return to God.

### Workers in the vineyard

Between that phone call and the reception of the first dose of the vaccine three days later, I was called to anoint patients with COVID-19 five times. That's how needed this ministry is during these times of pandemic. And God always provides. God does not abandon his people.

I have to admit that the reception of the vaccine comes with a bit of guilt since the doses are limited in our area, and I am sure there are people who could well use the doses given to me.

Yet, the reception of the vaccine gives me encouragement to continue serving the People of God in this capacity, and perhaps to do it with a little bit more confidence that indeed there is some light at the end of this tunnel.

At the end of the day, it's God's work. God takes care of his vineyard. We are only workers in his vineyard, and the future is not our own. †





# A COVID JOURNEY

by Tammy Heinlein

Tammy Heinlein serves in the development office for the Diocese of Saginaw. She has worked at the diocese for seven years and is a member of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish in Reese. She and her husband, Paul, have three adult children. Tammy survived a long battle with COVID-19 in September and October.

professionals. I had a small room with a bed, chair, sink and toilet. Little did I know, this would be my room for the next 25 days.

## “I thought I was dying”

I was put on oxygen and given several medicines. Medical staff came into my room only to check my vitals, give me pills and shots, or in response to the nurse’s call button. Even the machine that administered medicine via IV was on the other side of the double doors so the nurses, respiratory therapist and doctors didn’t have to come in. It was a lot of work for them to protect themselves when they entered the room.

When I was awake, I was so scared. I thought I was dying. All I could think of was that I was not able to say goodbye to my family and friends. I was afraid I would never be allowed to hug my husband and kids again. I prayed to God to please help me get through this.

A few days after being admitted, a respiratory therapist came in. Her name was Cindi. I started to cry and asked her if I was dying. She looked me straight in the eyes and said she was going to do everything she could to prevent me from dying. She also told me to fight with everything I had in me, and said she would fight to keep me off the ventilator.

That same night while I was sleeping, I heard voices. It sounded like people praying for me. I could never pinpoint any one voice. I just listened. I could hear someone saying, “Lord, please help Tammy fight this;” “God, please give Tammy and her family strength;” “Please keep Tammy in your sight and help her get through this,” and many more such prayers.

Some people may think I was dreaming or the drugs were affecting me, but I am absolutely positive that God allowed me to hear these voices so that I would keep

**P**rior to contracting coronavirus, I believe I was like most people. I wore a mask when I should. I washed my hands often. I still met with close friends and family, but only in small groups. I didn’t hug or kiss anyone so I wouldn’t spread the virus unknowingly. I thought I would be fine in our small community of Reese. I was wrong.

On Friday, Sept. 11, I went to my local pharmacy to have a COVID-19 test. I was an organizer for an event, and I wanted to be sure I was negative before the event. On Sept. 14, I received the result: negative.

For the following two days after the event, I felt fine. Then on Friday I had an irritating cough. By Saturday I also had

chills, but no fever. It seemed like the beginning of a cold. On Sunday I had a dry cough, chills and serious fatigue. Though I still had no fever, later that afternoon my breathing was labored. My husband, Paul, drove me to Ascension St. Mary’s Hospital in Saginaw. By Sunday evening, I was in the critical care unit on oxygen, isolated from my family and even the medical



fighting and not be so afraid.

The next day Father José Cabrera visited to anoint me. I was so happy to see him. His smile was so nice. He prayed over me, and it brought such a calming feeling. The fact that he risks his own health to go to the hospitals and anoint the sick is a wonderful blessing for us all. I truly felt the presence of God in my life at that time. I later heard he even prayed for me from the parking lot when the hospital would no longer allow him into my room.

Soon I was feeling strong enough to call my husband, Paul. When I heard his voice, we both started to cry. He said two days ago, the doctor called to say that, if I didn't improve by the next morning, they were going to put me on a ventilator. He was so happy to know the ventilator wasn't needed. I realized Paul had spoken to the doctor the same night I heard the prayers and the next morning was when Father José anointed me.

## Slow and steady

As the days went on, I got stronger. I was finally able to speak with the doctors. They were always encouraging. My pulmonary doctor, Dr. Ravinder Bhanot, told me I had been very close to going on the ventilator. He said the respiratory therapist, Cindi, and other nurses talked him into waiting. They were so sure I could do it! I call these nurses my earthly angels: Chris, Renee, Candice, Cathy, Cindy, Lisa, Patsy and so many more whose names I just can't remember.

Many days I sat in my chair and watched as the medical staff moved in the main area. They were busy at all times. If they weren't helping me or one of the other patients, they were wiping down every machine and surface with disinfectant.

I also witnessed so much death. So many weren't able to beat this virus. I would pray for their families. How hard it must have been for them. I would then thank God for giving me the strength to fight. I cannot talk enough about the wonderful care I was

given from the medical staff. Everyone was so encouraging.

## A goal to dance

One day when I was feeling low, Cindi said I needed a goal board. She asked me for my first goal; it was to hug my husband again. My second goal was to dance with my sons at their upcoming weddings. She added a goal, too: that I would send her a card for Christmas, since it was her favorite holiday. She added medical goals, like exercise and breathing, for me to work toward each day, along with daily goals for meditating and praying.

As the days went on, I slowly got stronger. I had good days, bad days and some very bad days, but I pushed through them. One day when I was especially struggling, one of the nurses brought me a large manila envelope. It contained cards, well wishes, prayers and notes from all of my co-workers. I can't begin to tell you how much that lifted my spirits!

On Monday, Oct. 19, I was released from the hospital. Before I left, some of the people who had helped me came to say goodbye. They were so happy to see me beat this virus. At the doors, there stood Paul and my daughter, Stacey. There were lots of hugs and tears. I was going home!

It has not always been easy since coming home. I am still on oxygen 24/7. I get monthly chest X-rays to see if the pneumonia that the virus left in my lungs is getting better. It is, slowly. The pulmonary doctor tells me that I am healing as they expected and to be patient. I'm trying.

## Finding what's important

I've learned through all of this that it is important to tell people how much you love them. I'm happy that I have met all my goals. I hug my husband every day. I hope to dance at both of my sons' weddings in August 2021 and October 2022. I sent Cindi a Christmas card.

I now make new goals weekly. I will be forever grateful for my family, friends, co-workers and all of the medical staff at Ascension St. Mary's Hospital for everything they have done. I am also thankful

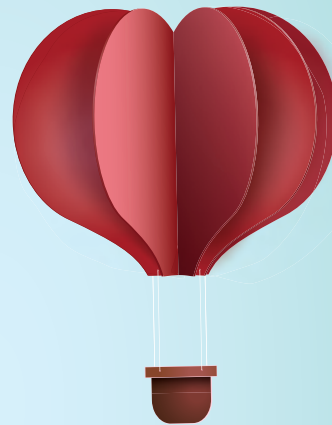


COVID-19 survivor Tammy Heinlein looks at a prayer quilt at her home in Reese. The quilt was made for her while she was in the hospital last year.

for my community, St. Elizabeth Parish of Hungary in Reese, and the family and friends who brought food for my family while they were recovering from their own coronavirus infections while I was in the hospital. Most importantly, I will always be grateful for my God and all the blessings he has given me.

I can't tell people enough how important prayer is. I know in my heart that I would not be here today if it weren't for all of the people near and far who prayed for me – some of whom didn't even know me. By the grace and love of our God he has allowed me to be here to tell my story. †

# Valentines and Love Languages



**I**magine getting a card for St. Valentine's Day and all it said was: "I will your good." Or, to sound a little more heartfelt, "I desire your good." If Hallmark produced a special line of greeting cards in honor of St. Thomas Aquinas, this is exactly the kind of card you could expect. For this great saint, love is precisely "willing the good of another." Admittedly, I don't expect that this kind of Valentine's card would be a big hit with most spouses and couples, since Thomas' definition of love does not exactly ooze with romance ...

A more recent Christian author has helped many married and single people, not by giving a new definition of love, but by helping them learn about the "love languages" – their own, and those of the important people in their lives. These languages are the specific ways that people experience love in the most profound way, and one or two of the love languages usually stand out for most people. According to Dr. Gary Chapman, author of several books on this topic, the five main love languages are:

- 1. Words of affirmation**
- 2. Acts of service**
- 3. Receiving gifts**
- 4. Quality time**
- 5. Physical touch**

I once heard about how Mother Teresa was passing through a city and saw an elderly person sitting alone on a bench with a sad expression. She decided to stop and sit on the bench for a while. After a few moments of quiet, she simply put her hand on the lonely person's hand. Soon a tear began to stream down the stranger's cheek. The saint had intuited the love language of the person God had placed in her life that day.

In my own home, it has been a true blessing to learn the love languages of my wife and children. No matter how big the pile of dinner dishes is, I know if I get them done it means the world to my wife. Acts of service are a crucial love language for her. My 9-year-old daughter, on the other hand, experiences love by spending quality time together, and she also is



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deeply moved by receiving and giving gifts. One of the best moments of this pandemic was on a lazy Saturday afternoon when I sat down with her and played some of the music that I loved when I was her age. I was also able to share some stories, like how James Taylor's song, "Fire and Rain," consoled me in the years after my mom died – especially this line: "Won't you look down upon me, Jesus, you've got to help me make a stand; you've just got to see me through another day." We kept track of all the songs she liked, and then I made a CD and gave that to her as a gift. Knowing her love languages helped me have a precious day with my daughter.

Of course, our life as Christians is not just about the horizontal level –i.e., our relationships with other human beings. The central symbol of our faith has both a horizontal and a vertical beam. So, with the Cross in mind, I started to wonder about how these five love languages might play out on the vertical plane in our relationship with God. We know from the Bible that "God is love"; thus, all of these love languages must ultimately have their source in the Lord. Below are a few brief reflections, but I invite you to reflect a little bit on your own relationship – and your own love languages – with God

### **Words of affirmation**

At the Baptism of Jesus, "a voice came from the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'" (Mt 3:17). God wants all his sons and daughters to hear these kinds of affirming, loving words in the depths of our hearts. Making time for quiet prayer in the midst of the daily carnival of sights and sounds will help us hear the Lord encouraging us and affirming our fundamental goodness.

But can we also show our love to the Lord by offering words of affirmation? Absolutely. Just think of the prayer of St. Faustina that has spread across the world in recent years: "Jesus, I trust in you." Behind these simple words is a loving affirmation of the Lord's goodness and faithfulness.

### **Acts of service**

Mother Teresa often recalled how, when she was just a girl, her mother taught a Gospel lesson she would always carry with her. Holding up five fingers, her mom carefully uttered these words: "You. Did. It. To. Me." These five words from St. Matthew's Gospel open up one of the great mysterious truths of the Christian life: that acts of loving service for one another are acts of service for the Lord. "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40).

But does God do loving acts of service for us? Yes, with every breath we take and every grace he offers us. We see an icon of God's service to us in the scene of Jesus washing the feet of his apostles at the Last Supper. Scripture seems to hint that God's service to us will continue in the life to come: "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them" (Lk 12:37).

### **Receiving gifts**

As a young priest, the future Pope Benedict XVI once observed that for our salvation, we are meant to rely on receiving. If we think about it, our entire life is one long journey of receiving gifts from the Lord, starting with the gift of simply existing. Even the crosses he permits in our lives are in some mysterious way meant to be gifts, even though we might not see how.

But can God receive gifts from us? Strictly speaking, we can only offer him what he has first given us. This is what lies behind C.S. Lewis' phrase, "sixpence none the richer." Lewis points out in *Mere Christianity* that our giving gifts to God is similar to when a small child says, "Daddy, give me sixpence to buy you a birthday present." But this does not diminish the joy a father takes in seeing his child present him with a gift that expresses his or her sincere love. And so God accepts our gifts, especially if it is the gift of ourselves whereby we love God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind.

### **Quality time**

Making time to be in communion with God during Mass, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, times of private prayer, or even a brief lifting of the heart to God on a coffee break are examples of the quality time that the Lord wants each of us to have with him. "Taste and see that the Lord is good," Psalm 34 reminds us.

### **Physical touch**

How blessed we are as Catholic Christians that touch is such a big part of our faith, especially in the sacraments. Even though, in this life, we don't get to directly touch Jesus' resurrected body in the way it exists in heaven, we do get to actually have communion with the Lord's body, blood, soul and divinity under the forms of bread and wine. When the Body of Christ or Precious Blood touches our tongue and we receive the Lord into our hearts, each of us suddenly becomes a living tabernacle, containing the One who is infinite love within us. And no earthly valentine can ever compare with that. ✚



NOW WE GET TO  
START A NEW  
CHAPTER— AND AN  
EVEN BETTER ONE.

*St. Thomas Aquinas*  
1225 – 1274  
Dominican Priest  
Theologian  
Philosopher  
Doctor of the Church  
Patron Saint of Catholic Schools  
Patron Saint of Students  
Known as "The Angelic Doctor"  
Nicknamed: "The Dumb Ox"  
Famous Work: *Summa Theologica*  
Honourably befriended by St. Louis  
King of France  
Canonized as Saint in 1323  
History of the Parish  
Originally installed in the old St. Joseph Church, Saginaw, Michigan  
(called by Mount Carmel of Chicago since 1931)  
Mantle and altar and enclosed iron plate window were acquired by  
St. Joseph School in a gift from an anonymous donor in 1973.  
St. Thomas Aquinas, Priory School

Lila  
Westphal

Lola  
Westphal

Noah  
Westphal





Lila Westphal, along with siblings Lola and Noah and mother Trina, pray during the Mass at which they received the sacraments of initiation on Sept. 11. Photo by Jeff Schrier.



Lola Westphal signs the Book of the Elect during the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion on March 8, 2020 at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw. Photo by Danielle McGrew Tenbusch.

# CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION INITIATES *journey into the Catholic Church*

BY DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF SCHRIER

Trina Westphal and her triplets, Lila, Lola and Noah, pose for a photo before their baptism at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Saginaw. The children's education at Nouvel Catholic Central Elementary School started the family down the path to become Catholic. Photo by Jeff Schrier.

**T**rina Westphal's voice breaks when she describes watching the baptism of her triplets. The children doctors told her she would never be able to have—the children she was told would not survive—were now receiving the sacraments of initiation along with her.

"I was just excited. ... To see that brought tears to my eyes. I thought I'd never be able to witness something like that," she recalled. "Now I was watching these babies be brought into the Church. It was just so beautiful."

Trina, who was raised in the First Assembly of God Church, entered the Catholic Church along with her triplets Lila, Lola and Noah on Sept. 11 last year. She decided the family would enter the Church after her children were drawn to the faith through their education at Nouvel Catholic Central Elementary School in Saginaw.

"(I like) being a part of Jesus' family," said Lola, now 9 years old.



Trina Westphal and her triplets, Lola, Noah and Lila, pose for a photo after the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion on March 8, 2020 at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw. The family was initiated into the Catholic Church, prompted by the childrens' education at Nouvel Catholic Central Elementary School. Photo by Danielle McGrew Tenbusch.

## MULTIPLE MIRACLES

After Trina married her high school sweetheart, they were devastated to hear they had only a one to three percent chance of having children. However, a positive pregnancy test came.

At the first ultrasound, they learned something unexpected: they were expecting triplets.

The obstetrician insisted on a pregnancy reduction, aborting one of the children. Trina refused and switched obstetricians.

At 19 weeks pregnant, Trina went to the hospital in early labor. She spent three months in the hospital to prevent extremely premature births with a low chance of survival.

"Again, we kept strong in our faith. We had lots of people praying with us," she said.

At 31 weeks pregnant, Trina wasn't feeling well. In consultation with the doctors, they opted to deliver the triplets. The girls weighed two pounds; Noah weighed three.

"They were born on a Sunday, the Lord's day," Trina said. "They did great."

## JOURNEYING AS A FAMILY

Though Trina and her family were not Catholic, the Christian faith played a large part in their life and she decided to send her triplets to Nouvel Catholic Central. She and her brother attended Catholic schools,

and she wanted her children to benefit from the same family-oriented, faith-filled education. Little did she know, that would start her down a path to join the Catholic Church.

The triplets started asking questions about what they saw their peers doing, like receiving communion, participating in Mary's May crowning or crossing themselves with holy water. They "played Mass" with Goldfish crackers and grape juice and acted out the Nativity dressed as Mary, Joseph and a sheep.

"When they learned more about that in school, they started asking when they can do that too," Trina said.

She realized what the family was being called to do. With the

triplets entering second grade, the age at which many of their peers would be receiving the sacraments, the timing was ideal.

She contacted St. Thomas Aquinas Parish's Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) director, Karen Bartels, and it was decided: they would all join the Catholic Church together.

"On Tuesdays, I'd go to my class, and they'd learn the same lesson on Sunday. I noticed we started praying more together and reading the Bible," Trina said. "We bonded on a different level."

Even though Trina admitted she initially wasn't sure where she could find the time to add RCIA classes to her already busy schedule, she came to treasure the weekly sessions and community projects.

"I found the time and I ended up loving the time," she said. "We all became friends and a tight knit group. Karen Bartels, who runs it, is just the most amazing soul. ... She knows what to say at the right moment."

"I'm amazed at (Trina's) sense of being such a forgiving person; her journey through life hasn't always been the easiest. Her sense of forgiveness is paramount," Karen said.

Karen helped prepare 11 candidates and catechumens, including the Westphals, for the sacraments in 2020.

"I'm just amazed by this group of people and their individual stories and how they related them to scripture," she said. "I am constantly amazed by how people minister to each other within the groups. They extend their friendship to each other. They listen intently to other people's journey in life and they nourish each other."



## A NEW CHAPTER

The Westphals were meant to receive the sacraments of initiation during the Easter Vigil at their parish, St. Thomas Aquinas in Saginaw. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the celebration was postponed.

"The kids kept asking, 'when are we going to (receive the sacraments?)' I was starting to get anxious and excited," she said. "Easter is a fun, beautiful time. ... I think of renewal. We had been participating in Lent, and this was the first time I really stuck to that. I remembered why I made the sacrifices I did; it really made me reflect. That was really, really nice."

But then Easter came and went without the public celebration of sacraments, including the Westphals' baptisms, first Communions and confirmations. Like so many others, they didn't know how long they would have to wait to be initiated into the Catholic Church.

"They never lost hope that the sacraments were theirs and their journey to Christ through the sacraments would be available to them," said Karen about the entire group. "Their dedication was amazing."

And so they waited. They prepared and prayed. Trina's grandmother made the girls' veils and the children's white masks.

The triplets were 8 when they received the sacraments alongside their mother. Though each said they were nervous about the big day, they are happy to be Catholic.

"My favorite part would be receiving the Eucharist,

the Body of Jesus," Lola said. She added that the sacramental preparation helped her learn some Bible stories and meet new people.

Lila's favorite part of joining the Church has been getting to know Jesus and others better.

"I was thinking that now since I've got baptised that I've felt more grateful and helpful, and (I) help people that need help," she said.

"I kind of felt excited being baptized," said Noah, adding that he also felt a little nervous. His favorite part of being Catholic is getting to receive Communion.

"Now we get to start a new chapter— and an even better one. We can go to Mass as a family and we can partake and we know what's going on," Trina said.

Their daily lives have shifted to be even more focused on God as well, including blessings before leaving home and nighttime prayers. Trina looks forward to living the liturgical year, including Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter as a fully-initiated Catholic. She is also grateful she could share this experience with her children, helping them see others live out their faith.

"I think they really saw with God we can get through anything. We can persevere," she said. "There's people around us who love God as much as us."

Along with her three miracles, Trina sees their family's journey to the Catholic Church as further proof that God has a plan.

"I needed this and didn't realize I needed it," she said. †

**(Left) Noah Westphal is baptised by Father Rick Bokinskie at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Saginaw. Photo by Jeff Schrier.**

**(Right) Trina Westphal, sponsored by her mother Stella Flores, receives the sacrament of Confirmation from Father Rick Bokinskie at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Saginaw. "She is a very big spiritual influence in our lives," Trina said of her mother, who is Catholic. Photo by Jeff Schrier.**



feature



Shelli Kelsey and her son Justin Eggers received the sacraments of initiation at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Saginaw on Sept. 11. Courtesy photo

## *Desire for the Eucharist* **LEADS NCCE STUDENT AND MOTHER TO CATHOLIC CHURCH**

BY DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH

**S**helli Kelsey's journey to the Catholic Church began when her daughter, Kelsey Mendez, shared the impact of volunteering at a soup kitchen as a student at the University of Detroit Mercy, a Catholic institution.

Though her family believed in God, they weren't regular churchgoers. Shelli's son, Justin Eggers, was already attending a Christian pre-school, and she had heard good things about Nouvel Catholic Central Elementary School in Saginaw. Shelli hoped Justin would experience the faithful service opportunities Kelsey described.

"He's got a good foundation, good teachers, all the good things that come with a Catholic school," she said.

As the years went on, Justin grew in his faith, nourished by his Catholic education, but he knew there was more.

"He wanted to be able to partake in the Eucharist. ... I think he just felt, going to a Catholic school, he wanted to be as close to the Lord as he could," Shelli said of Justin, now 10.

Justin chose to start RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) classes—and invited Shelli along with him. The two received the sacraments of initiation at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Saginaw on Sept. 11. Since taking the formation classes and joining the Catholic Church, Shelli said they pray much more, talk about Christ and have Catholic decor in their home.

"We know the Lord's around us, and we're not scared to talk about him," she said. "It's enriched all of our lives."

Shelli said Nouvel played a major role in the two becoming Catholic, and in retrospect sees God working in their lives.

"It's nice when you finally see how important (the Lord) is in our lives, and you start noticing how much he really is there," she said. †





## BISHOP GRUSS ASKS:

# What is our role in helping moms in need?

Bishop Robert Gruss preaches during the Holy Hour that began the Nine Days for Life on Jan. 21. Photo by Krystina Tyler.

BY DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH

On Jan. 22, the 48th anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision that made abortion legal in all 50 states, faithful from across the Diocese of Saginaw joined together both in person and virtually to pray for an end to abortion.

"All human beings are masterpieces. ... We are incredible works of art in the eyes of God," said Bishop Robert Gruss in his homily during the Mass for Life at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption.

Preceding the Mass, the diocese hosted a Rally for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children with speakers, prayer and worship music. Attendees learned about local pro-life efforts, such as H.I.S. Restoration Ministry Maternity Home.

Executive director Lisa Coleman shared how the faith-based nonprofit in Saginaw houses pregnant homeless women through pregnancy up to six months postpartum and helps them develop a plan of action for employment or education.

“Our vision is for each woman to emerge healthy and whole, capable of walking in God’s most excellent direction for their lives, and creating a hope and a future for the lives of their children using the gifts and the tools given to them at H.I.S. Restoration,” she said. “(God) desires to use us for healing and building others up.”

Lisa knows intimately the struggles of homelessness, as she herself was homeless for a time. As a child, she was also in foster care. Her earliest memory is of putting her belongings into a garbage bag, as she thought, ‘You put trash in a garbage bag. If that’s what I put my belongings in, then what am I?’

Holding to that memory, she ensures that every mother and child who leaves H.I.S. Restoration has proper luggage.

“They will never carry a trash bag as their identity because they are not trash. They are worthy and they are loved,” she said. “If there’s anything they learn when they leave us, it’s that they were loved and are loved by God.”

By showing God’s love to expecting mothers and honoring their dignity, H.I.S. Restoration volunteers are witnesses to life.

“We can and we will make a difference in this world, one life at a time,” Lisa said. “Actually, two lives at a time: mom and baby. After all, a baby changes everything.”

The rally also included prayer and remarks from Mark Grave-line, director of youth ministry for the Diocese of Saginaw, and Dave Sauve, president of Saginaw County Right to Life, as well as music from JAM, the Jesus and Music Praise Band led by Roberta Conley from St. John Vianney Parish in Saginaw.

Sister Esther Mary Nickel and Sister Maria Jose Perez, both Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma with science backgrounds, also spoke about the connection between faith



**“GOD DESIRES  
TO USE US FOR  
HEALING.”**

**– LISA COLEMAN,  
H.I.S. RESTORATION  
MINISTRIES**

Lisa Coleman, executive director of H.I.S. Restoration Ministry Maternity Home in Saginaw, shares her experiences ministering to pregnant women experiencing homelessness during the Rally for Life on Jan. 22. Photo by Jeff Schrier.

and science and how it helps us define the sanctity of life.

Science, Sister Maria Jose pointed out, tells us about the world and phenomena around us as we observe and learn.

“In that search for truth, we discover a profound mystery that, if we sit with it, if we’re open to it, it can lead us to worship of God and it can lead us to reverence knowing that God is a creator,” she said. “From there, we can begin to reverence life.”

Both sisters encouraged pro-life advocates to use science and faith to share the pro-life message in a gentle, inviting way and to consider our own attitudes in affirming life.

At the rally’s conclusion, attendees had time for quiet prayer for the more than 61.6 million souls lost to abortion since Roe v. Wade.

“Today we gather with great sadness in our hearts ... as we

reflect on this reality,” Bishop Gruss said in his homily. “As our prayers and the prayers of people all across our country storm heaven today, we pray, ‘Lord, in your great mercy, answer them.’”

Bishop Gruss also called the faithful to action and hope.

“We must ask ourselves, what is our role in helping moms in need?” he said. “In the end, it is everyday heroism made up of sharing, gestures of sharing, big or small— they are what builds a culture of life. As a Christian family gathered here today, we do grieve the loss of so many innocent babies over the past 48 years, and yet even in our grief we know there is hope. We know as Christians we must give this hope to others, especially those in need. So let us go therefore and not be afraid, because God is always with us, encouraging us.”



## Virtual retreat offers opportunities to learn and pray about pro-life issues

Though the Diocese of Saginaw did not participate in the national March for Life in Washington, D.C. this year due to the ongoing pandemic, pro-life advocates used the opportunity to offer a virtual retreat during the Nine Days for Life, Jan. 21 to 29. The retreat, called Witness to Life: A Nine-Day Reflection on the Dignity of the Person, included novena prayers, podcasts, recorded Rosaries and a video reflection. The Witness to Life Rally, Holy Hour and Masses were also live streamed.

Lori Becker, respect life coordinator for the diocese, said the virtual retreat grew from a conversation with Mark Graveline, youth ministry director.

"We were trying to think of ways to still do some formation and get everyone connected," she said. "Our hope and our prayer is that this would be like a nine-day virtual retreat. ... Our goal is to transform hearts and to see people for who they are."

Mark said his prayer is that the Holy Spirit will work through the Nine Days for Life.

"The hope of the reflections, discussions and prayers is to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. We profess every Sunday the Holy Spirit is the 'Lord and giver of life.' We know that by allowing our hearts to be closer to His, we will come to know the gift of every life," he said. "The podcasts demonstrate that there are many aspects in our lives that we fall short in recognizing that God is the author of life. We also intentionally prayed for the intercession of Mary, Our Mother, to help us be prepared for the Holy Spirit, as she was at the Annunciation and Pentecost."

The Nine Days for Life began with a Holy Hour and the Novena for Life led by the Knights of Columbus. In it, Bishop Robert Gruss spoke of Mary's relationship with the Holy Spirit and continued his ongoing prayer for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit among us.

"Every child conceived in this world is made in the image of our Creator, who then came upon earth to become our Redeemer," Bishop Gruss said.

He also challenged the faithful to always proclaim the truth in love.

"It is love that has the power to convert hearts. It is love that transforms lives. It is love that comes from the Holy Spirit," he said.

Friday January 22, 2021 Witness to Life Rally



Holy Hour including Novena for Life led by Knights of Columbus



**Witness to Life:**  
A Nine-Day  
Reflection on  
the Dignity of  
the Person was  
designed to be  
a virtual retreat  
with livestreamed  
events, podcasts,  
videos and online  
prayer resources.

In "The Tender Way of Mary: A Witness to the Dignity of Life" video reflection written by Maribeth Hopps and Lori Becker, a Gospel reading was paired with what Mary might have thought and a prayerful reflection on different pro-life issues. For example, Matthew's account of the Holy Family's Flight into Egypt accompanies a reflection on immigration and reminder of Christ's call to "welcome the stranger among us."

The podcasts, featuring local clergy and lay people, also spoke to a wide variety of the many pro-life issues: abortion, disabilities, racism, the elderly and those nearing the end of life, prisoners and the death penalty, suffering and assisted suicide, immigration, human trafficking and mental illness and suicide.

"We're hoping for people to be able to look at pro-life (issues) with a wider lens," said Lori. "(We hope to) open their hearts."

Similarly, the recorded Rosaries were prayed with intentions such as ending abortion, ending racism and general prayers for life. Groups representing the diocese, including different parish members and pastors, the Religious Sisters of Mercy and seminarians participated in the recordings. †

**Witness to Life resources remain available on the diocesan website, [www.saginaw.org/witness-to-life](http://www.saginaw.org/witness-to-life).**



# 'God brought me here'

## ***Kristin Smith's journey from the attorney general's office to leading the Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan***

BY GREG HELMLING

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF SCHRIER

**E**veryone has something to give.

Most people choose a career path based on what they have to offer potential employers: their strengths, skills and interests. Some people also hope to use their gifts to serve a higher purpose along the way.

Kristin Smith has an impressive set of gifts to offer, and she considers herself fortunate to have discovered the peace that comes from God in using these gifts in the way He has asked. Even better, her work allows her to help others experience that peace for themselves.

"I truly consider what I'm doing today to be a ministry," Kristin said.

Kristin is the executive director of the Catholic Community Foundation of

Mid-Michigan (CCFMM), an independent nonprofit organization that funds a variety of ministries that are aligned with and support the mission of the Diocese of Saginaw.

This year, the CCFMM is celebrating its 15th anniversary. Since 2006, it has shown steady growth as it fulfills its mission of giving donors the opportunity to provide endowed gifts in a secure legal structure. The foundation manages roughly \$30 million in assets, and it distributes more than \$1 million annually based on the wishes of faith-filled people who want to make a lasting impact on the spiritual journey of members of their community.

Kristin's gifts make her well-suited to lead the CCFMM. She is an attorney, spending most of her adult life practicing law as an assistant attorney general of the State of Michigan. She was also a certified public accountant, with fiscal expertise and an eye for detail that helps her run a

tight ship. Perhaps most importantly, the driver of all her gifts is a lifelong thirst for truth.

"Growing up, I wanted to know the truth," Kristin recalled. "I remember writing a paper in the seventh grade about being a lawyer because I wanted to find the truth, and I knew lawyers worked with the truth."

Kristin grew up in the Lansing area. Her family attended St. John Student Parish in East Lansing, where she was baptized. She attended Resurrection Catholic School in Lansing through second grade and she received the sacraments of reconciliation, first Communion and confirmation. She then attended public schools, graduating from East Lansing High School. From there, she followed what she refers to as the local circuit: Lansing Community College, Michigan State University and Cooley Law School. She studied economics, accounting and law.

After passing the bar examination, Kristin took an accounting position within the Office of the Michigan Auditor General. She served on the team that performed the first audit of the Michigan Supreme Court. Along the way, she passed the CPA exam and earned her CPA license.

Soon, Kristin moved to the Michigan Attorney General's office, where she gained a wealth of legal experience in a variety of areas, including finance, civil rights, discrimination and regulation of energy providers. She spent 18 years there as an assistant attorney general, including a long stretch serving under Attorney General Frank J. Kelley.

"The AG's office was the best law firm in the state. We worked with the truth, good



***“It can be summed up in one word: trust. I consider myself a guardian.”***

or bad. The truth mattered,” Kristin said.

During this time, Kristin was blessed with a daughter, Noreen, and a son, Connor.

“My daughter’s birth prompted my desire to know more about the faith that was given to me in my youth,” she said.

In the following decades, Kristin’s thirst for truth led her deeper and deeper into the life of the Catholic Church, on a journey toward knowing her faith and, most importantly, encountering the Lord. Her journey included Life in the Spirit seminars, Marian catechist courses, Unbound prayer ministry, Encounter Ministry classes, frequent Eucharistic Adoration, reading the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Along the way, Kristin made the decision to leave the attorney general’s office.

“It was a crystalizing decision. I was leaving a job that guaranteed a retirement income and health insurance for the rest of my life,” Kristin said. “But somewhere in my heart, I knew there was something missing.”

She joined a company and served as vice president and corporate counsel, but corporate work was not the answer, either.

“It was a beautiful day, and I was looking out of my office window at the sun glistening off the St. Clair River under the Blue Water Bridge, and I asked God, ‘What am I doing here?’ A week later, my position was eliminated. So, I thought, ‘OK, Lord, you’re listening.’ If there is one thing I’ve learned, it’s that God listens,” Kristin said. “What next? I had no idea, but I was not afraid. I knew in my heart; this was God’s way of directing my life.”

Kristin applied for a variety of legal positions and looked for ways to use her free time by volunteering. She was asked by her pastor to assist with the parish’s capital campaign, which was part of a \$65 million capital campaign across the Diocese of Lansing. Her volunteer work caught the attention of the company overseeing the massive fundraising effort and eventually led to a full-time position within the company.

Over the next year and a half, Kristin helped 11 parishes raise \$5.4 million. When the capital campaign ended, the company moved on to its next project in another state. Leaders asked Kristin to move with them, but she declined.

The seed, however, was planted.

“I had never done any development work before,” Kristin said. “Helping with that campaign, I worked with parishioners, pastors and parish staff. I witnessed God at work. I witnessed people’s faith working in ways I had never seen. It was God working in and through them. What a blessing to witness such faith.”

When the opportunity presented itself, Kristin accepted a position at her parish. Her responsibilities included everything from development to accounting. While working there, another door opened ... and Kristin accepted the executive director position at the CCFMM.

“This is the role that allows me to draw upon all of my professional, personal and spiritual experiences and my faith,” Kristin said. “God brought me here. There is a calm assurance when you are where you’re supposed to be.”

Since joining the CCFMM in 2019,

*The mission and vision of the CCFMM encourages joyous, faithful giving that is responsibly managed and reflective of the teachings of Jesus Christ, forever meeting the needs of all God’s people.*

CCFMM establishes endowments that support the poor, seminarians, Catholic schools, religious education, lay ministry formation, protection of life and other diocesan ministries. The faithful can give legacy gifts that impact Christ’s mission into perpetuity.

Kristin has worked tirelessly to update donor data, accounting and endowment software, positioning the foundation to respond transparently and promptly to endowment donors, benefactors, advisors and board members and to grow.

Supported by her board of directors, Kristin, along with her administrative assistant Connor Rabine, volunteers Joan Ramm and Mary Beth Looby have been sharing stories highlighting the CCFMM’s impact across the diocese. These stories have been published on the foundation’s website and in their newsletter, *Feeding our Faith*. Additionally, high school and college scholarship opportunities and donor-advised fund opportunities are administered.

As the CCFMM enters its 15th year, Kristin says she looks forward to meeting more pastors, parishioners, endowment donors and benefactors.

“It can be summed up in one word: trust. I consider myself a guardian,” Kristin said. “We want to respond to the philanthropic needs of the greater Catholic community, to ensure the donor’s wishes are honored when they leave legacy gifts to support Catholic parishes and diocesan ministries. The good work of the Catholic church needs support beyond our lifetime.” †

**For more information** about endowments and how legacy gifts impact the Diocese of Saginaw, its ministries and parishes, please visit the CCFMM website at [ccfmm.org](http://ccfmm.org). You can also follow the CCFMM on Facebook.





Mark Prindiville leafs through a bound edition of the *Catholic Weekly* in an archive room in the basement of the Diocese of Saginaw Office in Saginaw Township.



Mark Prindiville holds a program dated June 1, 1938, from the installation of the Most Rev. William F. Murphy, the first Bishop of Saginaw.

## Diocesan archivist looks forward to *preserving local Church history*

BY DANIELLE  
MCGREW  
TENBUSCH

PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY JEFF  
SCHRIER

**W**hat Mark Prindiville initially described as “stumbling” into the field of archiving, he now believes was God at work.

“One of the things you want to do in an archive is to share the history of a place, of an organization, of a diocese,” he said. “If you can share the history and the stories of those who probably didn’t think their voice would ever be heard in life— If you can touch someone doing that, you’re doing your job right.”

Mark, who most recently served as assistant archivist in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, has experience doing just that: his work included organizing and preserving materials related to the local Catholic community’s ministry to AIDS victims in the 1980s. One impacted neighborhood’s parish, for example, had an oral history video explaining how they supported the sick and restarted a 40 hours devotion adoring the Blessed Sacrament.

“These are the kinds of extraordinary memories

that I hope to learn more about and to share in the Diocese of Saginaw,” he said.

While in college, a friend invited Mark, a history major, to join him for an archiving class and internship.

“I immediately fell in love with the field,” he said.

Mark went on to earn a master’s degree in library and information science from Wayne State University in Detroit. He took a temporary position with the Hoover Institution Library and Archives in San Francisco before landing his job at the archdiocese. Combining his passion for history and archiving with his faith wasn’t something that he had ever considered, but he found it fascinating. One might even say it was a calling.

“Ever since discovering this position after coming back from California, I thought, there’s got to be something that’s going on here,” he said. “This is the first time in a long time I’ve taken a position and I’ve just felt really excited and really empowered.”

As the first archivist for the Diocese of Saginaw, Mark’s goal is to establish an official archive. Though



the diocese holds many records, they need to be organized, catalogued and digitized. Mark will also manage a physical archive, which many other dioceses and archdioceses have.

“Nothing has been officially catalogued for diocesan staff or parishioners to seek out to try to find past events, photographs (or) newspapers. To have an official archive would be nice, because the Diocese of Saginaw has played ... a significant part of the region’s history,” he said.

That history stretches back to 1938, when the Diocese of Saginaw was established by Pope Pius XI, originally encompassing 16 counties. Parishes can use the archive to gather materials for celebrations, and individuals can learn more about their local church’s history.

Mark will focus on not only preserving the overall diocese’s history, but also that of the individual parishes throughout the region.

“The diocese isn’t just figureheads and the people behind the scenes. It’s also the people who make up all these different parishes and different wonderful communities,” he said.

To that end, Mark is launching a project to gather people’s responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. This project will document the experiences of clergy, staff and parishioners. In March, Mark will be posting a form on the diocesan webpage, [www.saginaw.org](http://www.saginaw.org), for participants to send digital files, such as photographs, essays, videos or social media posts.

“You can see this as a potential point of healing, (and) some unity and solidarity as well,” he said. “(It’s) a potential inside look at how the different communities themselves have been affected and how the diocese can respond.”

Mark is also excited about establishing a blog for the archives office, which will also be accessible through the diocesan website.

“In it, I’ll be making posts on myself, archiving, parish histories, scanned images and artifacts and so much more,” he said. “I’m hoping it’ll be a nice outlet for parishioners and the general public to really get to know the diocese’s history and what sort of treasures we have stored up in our archive.”

In addition to maintaining the archive, Mark will teach parishes about records management, including properly storing materials to avoid environmental or pest damage.

“You’re losing a lot of historical value to a parish or to a ministry if the records aren’t properly taken care of,” he said.

“If you can share the history and the stories of those who probably didn’t think their voice would ever be heard in life— If you can touch someone doing that, you’re doing your job right.”

Mark looks forward to providing archival services to individuals and parishes throughout the diocese as he works to preserve history for decades to come, serving as a source of both learning and inspiration. It’s his way of using his own gifts and talents for the good of the Church. †



Mark Prindiville looks at an old large-format negative at the Diocese of Saginaw Office in Saginaw Township.



Archivist Mark Prindiville has decades of files, clippings, negatives, photographs and artifacts to sort through and catalog at the Diocese of Saginaw Office in Saginaw Township.



# CATHOLIC SCHOOLS HAVE REMAINED OPEN IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

BY DANIELLE  
MCGREW  
TENBUSCH

**A**s the COVID-19 pandemic continues, Catholic schools throughout the Diocese of Saginaw have risen to the occasion and remained open, continuing to safely educate students in the classroom while welcoming new students and families and supporting staff.

"I am eternally grateful for all that our educators and school staff have done and continue to do to make in-person learning possible at our Catholic schools. Nothing can fully replace the impact of face-to-face learning and sharing the message of Christ every day in our schools," said Cormac Lynn, superintendent of Catholic schools for the diocese.

The Diocese of Saginaw formed a Back to School Task Force to support the diocese's 12 schools and the school families' desires to safely provide in-person learning. Measures in place include daily screenings, masks, desk shields for teachers and students, distancing (made possible because of small class sizes), humidifiers, outdoor classrooms, no visitors inside, rigorous cleaning and more. Halfway through the school year, the data shows success.

"Our overall infection rate for students and staff across the diocese through mid-December was 2.4 percent. The infection rate for students in preschool through 12th grade was 1.6 percent. This relatively low rate is in large part due to the mitigation strategies that our schools implemented, which in many cases, exceeded the requirements established by the state," Cormac said in a letter to the diocesan Catholic schools community.

Catholic school faculty and staff have also begun to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Distribution and access varies by county, based on availability.

In addition to the new students who enrolled at the beginning of the school year, the diocesan Catholic school community welcomed more than 40 additional students during the first semester while maintaining appropriate distancing.

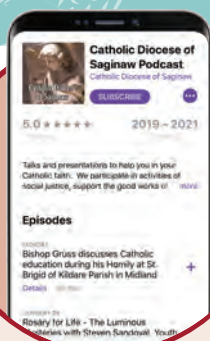
"This is, in part, a result of our ability to safely provide in-person learning," Cormac said. "While the 2020-21 school year has been anything but business as usual, I am confident that we have continued to provide an excellent faith-centered education for our students and families."

Families have also continued to take advantage of the Welcome Scholarship launched during the 2019-20 academic year. As of January 2021, more than 350 students have benefitted from the scholarship, which was the result of a \$100,000 gift from the Wolohan Foundation with a matching contribution from the diocese.

These successes would not be possible without the continued diligence and dedication of the teachers and faculty.

"Every Catholic school staff member has gone above and beyond to support our families and students. Our Catholic school teachers in particular have been asked to do so much," Cormac said. "Through collaboration with the Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan, the Office of Catholic Schools was able to distribute over \$53,000 to support our Catholic school teachers across the diocese. The funds were generated by various endowments that support Catholic education."

"Our Catholic schools are a true gift and a blessing to our entire diocese," Bishop Robert Gruss said. "Despite many challenges faced this year, they have remained open for in-person learning. Our students are thriving academically and are happy to be with their friends. The aspect of faith and prayer, part of the rhythm of each school day, are at the heart of the education we are providing. Our desire is for our students to know Jesus Christ personally, to fully utilize all the gifts and talents God has generously given to them and to, in turn, share the love of the Lord with others." †



## Subscribe to Catholic Diocese of Saginaw on your favorite podcast app to never miss an episode!

Our podcast channel recently crossed 10,000 downloads. Check out what so many have already discovered: a faith-filled audio resource featuring inspiring talks, prayers and homilies from Bishop Gruss and local clergy, religious and laypeople! Learn more at [saginaw.org/news](http://saginaw.org/news)



## local news



Bishop Robert Gruss sprinkles holy water on the newly renovated children's playroom at Mustard Seed Shelter along with director Amy Bartels Roe and Jaymier, a resident at the shelter.

### Mustard Seed Shelter blessing marks completion of expansion and renovation project

Bishop Robert Gruss officiated a small blessing of Mustard Seed Shelter, an emergency women and children's shelter in Saginaw, on Dec. 18.

"What a blessing this is for the community," said Bishop Gruss as he prayed outside of the home. "Peace lives here. Christ's love lives here."

The 3,500-square-foot expansion was completed in July 2020 and includes 10 new guest bedrooms to accommodate single women experiencing homelessness. All the new rooms were filled by the first week of August.

The renovation portion of the project included new and refinished flooring; updated electrical, plumbing and lighting systems; glass block windows and other practical and aesthetic improvements. The existing bedrooms were also refurbished to create seven guest bedrooms to accommodate families, with space for up to 25 women and children.

"This is a remarkable reflection of Christ's love for his people – caring for the most vulnerable in their moments of greatest need," said Bishop Gruss as he concluded the blessing throughout the home. "In a very real sense, Mustard Seed represents both the corporal and spiritual works of mercy in the work they do every day."

Learn more about Mustard Seed Shelter at [www.themustardseedshelter.org](http://www.themustardseedshelter.org)



### Join Bishop Gruss in a journey with St. Joseph

throughout the season of Lent. Video reflections will be offered each week, along with other content and resources to nourish your

faith. Visit the diocesan website, [www.saginaw.org](http://www.saginaw.org)

## Events

### Called to Religious Life?

Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma

**Come and See Dates:**

March 12-14 and May 21-23

Details at [www.rsmofalma.org](http://www.rsmofalma.org)

### Marriage Preparation Workshop

**Date:** Saturday, March 13

**Location:** Online

**Time:** 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

**Cost:** \$50 per couple

**To register:** Call (989) 797-6660 or register online at [saginaw.org/events](http://saginaw.org/events)

**Registration deadline:** March 8

The Diocesan Marriage Preparation Workshop helps engaged couples understand what it means to get married in the Catholic Church. The topics covered include marriage as a sacrament, marital intimacy, natural family planning, communication, conflict resolution and family of origin.

### Relationship Inventory Seminar (Prepare-Enrich)

**Date:** Saturday, April 17

**Location:** Online

**Time:** 9 a.m. to p.m.

**Cost:** \$50 per couple

**To register:** Call (989) 797-6660 or register online at [saginaw.org/events](http://saginaw.org/events)

**Registration deadline:** April 12

This seminar will explore relationship strength and growth areas, strengthen communication skills, identify and manage major stressors, understand and appreciate personality differences and many other topics. Each couple receives a personalized report. A trained and certified Prepare-Enrich facilitator will lead the seminar.

### Event to support Catholic school education

St. Brigid Catholic School in Midland is selling raffle tickets for its largest school fundraiser, Emerald Evening. Tickets can be purchased online at [www.auctria.com/auction/emeraldevening2021](http://www.auctria.com/auction/emeraldevening2021) or at the school office. Proceeds from the Emerald Evening fundraiser help with tuition assistance in an effort to give all children the opportunity to receive a faith-based education and assist with many other important needs.

faith *Saginaw*

The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw

The Most Rev. Robert D. Gruss  
**PUBLISHER**

Jan/Feb 2021  
Volume 15 • Issue 1

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FAITH Saginaw (USPS 024206) is a membership publication of the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw, 5800 Weiss St., Saginaw, MI 48603-2762. Published six times a year in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December. For Subscription information, e-mail [subscriptions@faithsaginaw.org](mailto:subscriptions@faithsaginaw.org). If you have a change of address, please contact your parish. Periodicals postage paid at Saginaw, Mich., or additional offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FAITH Saginaw, MI 48603-2762. FAITH Catholic. FAITH is a trademark of FAITH Catholic.

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They have a **99-percent graduation rate** and **94 percent go to college.**

Additionally, Catholic school students are known for the **countless hours of service** they provide in their local communities. In the Diocese of Saginaw, students help **feed the poor, visit the elderly and raise awareness of important social issues.**

SCHOOL	PHONE	GRADES
St. Mary, Alma	989-463-4579	P-6
Auburn Area Catholic, Auburn	989-662-6431	P-5
All Saints Central High, Bay City	989-892-2533	9-12
All Saints Central Middle, Bay City	989-892-2533	6-8
All Saints Central Elementary, Bay City	989-892-4371	P-5
Our Lady of Lake Huron, Harbor Beach	989-479-3427	P-8
St. Brigid of Kildare, Midland	989-835-9481	K-8
Sacred Heart Academy - Elementary, Mount Pleasant	989-773-9530	K-6
Sacred Heart Academy, Mount Pleasant	989-772-1457	7-12
St. Joseph the Worker, Beal City	989-644-3970	K-6
St. Michael, Pinconning	989-879-3063	K-8
St. Elizabeth Area, Reese	989-868-4108	P-8
Nouvel Catholic Central Elementary, Saginaw	989-399-2230	P-5
Nouvel Catholic Central Middle, Saginaw	989-399-2230	6-8
Nouvel Catholic Central High, Saginaw	989-399-2230	9-12

