

THE MAGAZINE  
OF THE CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE OF  
SAGINAW

Issue 4, 2022

# faith *Saginaw*

## FROM THE BISHOP

Synod data  
uncovers  
opportunities  
for growth

## IN THE KNOW

WITH FATHER JOE

Why did Jesus  
ascend to Heaven?

# 'GO WHERE THE SPIRIT LEADS'

Diocesan coordinator of evangelization says  
we are primed for a 'culture of evangelization'

## SPECIAL REPORT

Diocesan Synod Report  
reveals themes to direct  
future planning

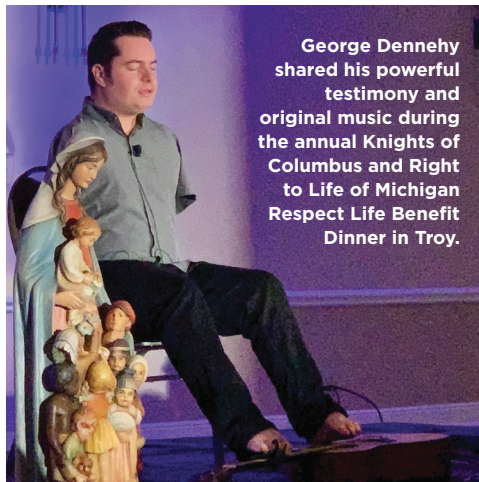
## FEATURE

'Team Thelen' makes  
Y.E.S. a family affair



# Invincible courage in Christ

**T**his past March, I heard one of the most inspiring stories I have ever heard. A Romanian-born man named George Dennehy, who was born without arms, abandoned in an orphanage after birth and had a death certificate hanging on his crib with a blank spot for the “day” to be filled in, witnessed to the truth that God has a plan and purpose for each life.



At 18 months and weighing only 9 pounds, George’s adoptive parents, from the United States, welcomed him into their family. They gave him a new name, care and food — and, through the power of their unconditional love, changed his life forever.

George’s parents put no limits on what their son could do and at 8 years old, George began learning to play the cello with his feet. George later taught himself guitar, electric bass and basic piano. After a video he created went viral, he found himself on stage with a popular band performing in front of 7,000 people.

Today, George travels the world sharing his music and his story, which include the dark times he endured while being bullied in high school. George said the physical challenges, were nothing compared to his emotional struggles. He described how he hated himself, saw himself as worthless and did not believe his life mattered. He said he viewed himself the same way many others had viewed him as an orphan in Romania. He questioned God’s love and wondered to himself, “If God is so good, why did he forget to put arms on me?”

Then God led him to this verse:



**ERIN LOOBY CARLSON**

is editor of **FAITH** Saginaw magazine and director of communications for the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw.

*You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works! My very self you know. Psalm 139:13-14*

He allowed God’s Word to soak in. Even before he was born, God had a purpose and a plan. George began to truly believe, with God’s grace, that he was indeed wonderfully made.

In these post-Roe days, we must continue to believe and remind others that God has a plan and purpose for each life. George reminds us that no life is worthless, a mistake or an accident. May George’s testimony and the example of his parents stir within us a desire to accompany others and to witness to life by supporting the unborn and born alike. May the Holy Spirit fill us with peace, kindness, goodness, generosity and gentleness in our conversations as we move forward. And may we each know and believe the depths of God’s love for us.

Come Holy Spirit! † *Erin*

## INSIDE

**4 | FROM THE BISHOP**  
Synod data uncovers opportunities for growth

**6 | IN THE KNOW WITH FATHER JOE**  
Why did Jesus ascend to Heaven?

**7 | HABITS OF THE HEART**  
Insincerity is an evil from within

**8 | PARENTING**  
Keeping Christ at the center of a busy week

**9 | KINDLING FOR THE FIRE**  
Picking dandelions

**10 | FEATURE**  
Creative penance invites contemplation on Christ’s sacrificial love

**12 | FAITH MATTERS**  
Speaking life: Wise Advice from an Emmy Winner

**14 | ‘GO WHERE THE SPIRIT LEADS’**  
Diocesan coordinator of evangelization says we are primed for a ‘culture of evangelization’

**18 | SPECIAL REPORT**  
Diocesan Synod Report reveals themes to direct future planning for the Diocese

**23 | ORDINATION**  
Deacon Matthew Gembrowski ordained to transitional diaconate

**24 | FEATURE**  
‘Team Thelen’ makes Y.E.S. a family affair

**26 | FEATURE**  
Thumb Catholics celebrate faith in annual Rural Life Mass

**28 | LOCAL NEWS**

**29 | CULTURE**  
St. Dominic’s orange tree sowed the seeds of faith

**30 | CCFMM**  
Joshua Robert Jasman: A joyful life of caring and sharing

**31 | SOURCE + SUMMIT**  
A reasonable act of faith



## COVER STORY



Leading local synod efforts in the Diocese of Saginaw helped prepare Don for the work of evangelization ahead.

14



10



24



18

**faith** *Saginaw*

The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw

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

**Volume 16 • Issue 4 • 2022**

Erin Looby Carlson  
**EDITOR IN CHIEF**

Father Andy LaFramboise  
Erin Looby Carlson  
Sister Mary Judith O'Brien, RSM  
Dr. Dan Osborn  
Danielle McGrew Tenbusch  
**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**

Danielle McGrew Tenbusch  
Jeff Schrier  
**CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS**



FAITH Catholic

Elizabeth Martin Solsburg  
**PRESIDENT/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Abby Feldpausch  
Matt Watters  
**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

Rev. Joseph Krupp  
Sheri Wohlfert  
**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**

[www.FaithCatholic.com](http://www.FaithCatholic.com)

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.

**GIVE THE GIFT OF**  
**faith** *Saginaw*

**Order a subscription today:**  
[subscriptions@dioceseofsaginaw.org](mailto:subscriptions@dioceseofsaginaw.org)  
989.797.6630



# Synod data uncovers opportunities for growth



**T**he words of Pope Francis set the stage for the 2023 Synod – *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*. The purpose of the Synod is not to produce documents, but “to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to hands.” When one looks at the input gathered from the listening sessions throughout the Diocese of Saginaw, I believe that our data expresses these dreams, this vision, this hope.



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

Looking back at the pre-synodal document, it is important to recall the the purpose of this process. “Synodality enables the entire People of God to walk forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, to participate in the mission of the Church in the communion that Christ establishes between us. Walking together is the most effective way of manifesting and putting into practice the true nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.”

Having recently completed

the synodal process for the Diocese of Saginaw, I want to thank the people across the Diocese who took the time to participate in this endeavor. Many participants initially were apprehensive or expressed skepticism on the process, wondering if it would be worthwhile and bear any fruit, but everyone felt heard. The post-synodal feedback from the parish facilitators revealed gratitude for being able to participate and appreciation for the process. Most voiced a desire to continue participating in regular local level listening

sessions even after the synod is complete. Those who participated found it so valuable, they wished more people would have joined the listening sessions.

I invite you to read about the key findings from the Diocesan Synod Report, which is shared on page 18.

One parish report offered this vision for our diocese: *Churches full of families and people of all ages coming together to fully participate in unity as Catholics... Mass would be full of engaging music, a vibrant pastor, and welcoming to all who walk into our worship space... There would be overflowing vocations with parishes full of priests, nuns, commissioned lay ministers and laity... Our parish grounds and buildings would be up to date, handicap accessible and to have buildings outfitted to fit all the needs of parishioners and various ministries.* This vision describes beautifully the outcome the Holy Father had hoped for when setting the



## HOLY HOURS FOR VOCATIONS WITH BISHOP GRUSS

All are welcome to pray with Bishop Gruss for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. Holy Hours are from 7 to 8 p.m.

synodal process in motion.

I also invite you to take the time to read the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw Synod Summary Report found on the diocesan website. In doing so, you will find there is a great desire to give witness to who we are: the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. In the Summary Report, the common themes have been categorized to give witness to these four characteristics or “marks” of the Church.

The content of the many synod meeting summaries submitted from across the diocese was very inspirational. The honest input captured highs and lows, joys and wounds, conflicts and agreements, while highlighting what is being done well and opportunities for improvement. Common issues across the diocese are highlighted in this report, and there will be follow-up on issues specific to individual parishes.

I do believe the data provided from the listening sessions can become a wonderful springboard to a future priority planning process for the Diocese of Saginaw, and I would like to highlight two areas uncovered in the synod here.

One is in the area of formation, including faith formation for adults. There was a significant desire and need

among Catholics to learn more about the Faith. There was an expressed need to better understand the basic tenets of the Catholic Faith, including Mass, the sacraments and Church history. Wrote one vicariate: “There was an especially strong theme of wanting to understand the Mass and Eucharist better.” It is my hope that the three-year Eucharistic Revival, which we began on June 19, will be the catalyst for eucharistic formation. This can begin by reading the recent document on the Eucharist from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church.

Another area uncovered was in regard to the deepening of faith. Many participants expressed a love of their parish and their faith. They are looking for more reverence, more encounters with Jesus and more evangelization. The Eucharistic Revival encourages parishes to increase opportunities or to begin opportunities for eucharistic adoration as a means for these deeper encounters with Jesus. I have begun Eucharistic adoration opportunities twice a month in the form of Holy Hours for Vocations in parishes across the Diocese.

The focus for these Holy

Hours is for an increase of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life within our Diocese, while at the same time deepening our own love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. When it comes to your parish, I encourage you to join me there in praying for vocations for our diocese. Making a pilgrimage to other parishes for these Holy Hours would be a wonderful sacrificial gesture, allowing the Lord Jesus to deepen his life in you.

Much is to be done in addressing the feedback outlined in the Synod Report. The two initiatives mentioned above are starting points, as well as our Catholic school initiative. With the important information and insights gathered throughout the synod, the Diocese of Saginaw is better positioned to identify and serve the needs of the faithful.

Therefore, this synodal process is not over for us. We must continue to listen to one another, to journey with each other and discern together the Spirit’s direction for us. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon this Diocese anew so the mission of Jesus Christ may be more fully realized in our midst. †

### TUESDAY, AUG. 30

St. Hubert Parish, Sacred Heart Church, Bad Axe

### THURSDAY, SEPT. 8

Our Lady Consolata Parish, St. Pancratius Church, Cass City

### THURSDAY, SEPT. 22

St. Mark Parish, Au Gres

### THURSDAY, OCT. 6

Resurrection of the Lord Parish, Standish

### TUESDAY, OCT. 11

Our Lady of Hope Parish, St. Cecilia Church, Clare

### THURSDAY, NOV. 10

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish Church, Midland

### TUESDAY, NOV. 22

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish, Vassar

### TUESDAY, DEC. 6

St. Jude Thaddeus Parish, St. John the Evangelist Church, Essexville

### TUESDAY, DEC. 20

Corpus Christi Parish, Holy Trinity Church, Bay City

---

**“... this synodal process is not over for us. We must continue to listen to one another, to journey with each other and discern together the Spirit’s direction for us.”**

---





**Dear Father Joe: Why did Jesus ascend to heaven? Why not just stay here on earth? If he was immortal, he never would've died and we could all see him and know he is God. I don't understand this.**

I like this question so much. The answer to it is really revelatory of the difference between how God is and how we are. It's questions like this that help us really soak in the Scripture passage where God says "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways." (Is 55:8)

So, let's get after it ...

For my answer to make sense, we have to look at the problem. The problem was our human nature. When God made humans, it was so we could know, love and serve him and do so in freedom and fullness of heart.

The Trinity, that communion of life and love, created creatures that could enter into their community in freedom and joy.

The problem is, we used that freedom poorly and, as a result, our nature got "broken" or distorted. God goes into detail about this in the Book of Genesis.

When Jesus was conceived in Our Mother's womb, he was conceived fully human and fully divine. In the moment of that conception, human and divine nature were fused together in the very person of Jesus. Why would God do this? Quite simply, since our nature was the problem keeping us from him, he took it on.

He took it on so that he could redeem our nature and save us. How does that work?

Well, by being fully human and fully God, he sanctified all the non-sinful elements of the human experience. Simply by living as a human, he made every human experience holy. By working with his hands, human labor became holy. By crying, he made tears holy. On and on and on ... But he didn't just live, he died, too.

As our Mass prayers put it: By dying, he destroyed our death and by rising, restored our life.

So, he made our life and death holy and redeemed our nature through his resurrection. The next step is heaven: Jesus needed to take our human nature with him to heaven so that we could go there one day. Jesus puts it this way: "I am going ahead of you to prepare a place for you so that where I am, you also may be." (Jn 14: 3)

So, Jesus ascended into heaven to take our human nature there and open it up as a possibility for each of us, which is wonderful news. If the story ended there, we would be blessed beyond all description, but it doesn't end there.

He sent his Holy Spirit to us.

He told the disciples it would happen. If you look in the Gospel of John, he talked about it even before his death and resurrection. Let's take a look at The Gospel of John, chapter 16 (verses 7, 12-13):

"[Jesus said to his disciples]: It is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming."

He was and is talking about the Holy Spirit here, but of course the disciples didn't understand it, who could've predicted that?

When we look at Jesus' ascension, we see that he let them know that the time for the coming of that Spirit was at hand. He told them to wait in Jerusalem for that gift and, as you know, he sent his Spirit on them during the Feast of Pentecost.

As a result of the descent of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were able to spread all through the world and lead people to Jesus. They were not perfect, but they were fearless and filled with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, piety and fear of the Lord.

By placing his Spirit in them, Jesus was spreading himself out throughout the whole world in a way he could not, even in a resurrected body.

And now, that Spirit is yours.

The disciples did not keep that Holy Spirit to themselves, but they passed it along generation after generation. In your baptism and confirmation, you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that allows us to become a part of his body on earth.

Our human wisdom tells us it would be better if Jesus had remained here in his resurrected body, but we believe Jesus: It is better that he left. We believe it is better because he opened heaven for us and entrusted us with his mission in the world.

Call on the Holy Spirit every day as often as possible, and remember who and what lives in you!

Enjoy another day in God's presence. †

— “

**JESUS NEEDED TO TAKE OUR HUMAN NATURE WITH HIM TO HEAVEN SO THAT WE COULD GO THERE ONE DAY.”**



**FATHER JOE KRUPP**

*is a former comedy writer who is now a Catholic priest.*

✉ @Joeinblack



# Insincerity is an evil from *within*



The Death of Ananias, Raphael, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

A man named Ananias, however, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property. He retained for himself, with his wife's knowledge, some of the purchase price, took the remainder, and put it at the feet of the apostles. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart so that you lied to the Holy Spirit and retained part of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain yours? And when it was sold, was it not still under your control? Why did you contrive this deed? You have lied not to human beings, but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last, and great fear came upon all who heard of it. (Acts 5:1-5)



**SISTER MARY JUDITH O'BRIEN, RSM** is a member of the Religious Sisters of Mercy

of Alma. She serves as chancellor of the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw.

habits  
of the  
heart

Ananias' fault was not in retaining a portion of the land's selling price, but in deceiving the community. St. John Henry Newman referred to this passage with the following comment:

*...nothing is so rare as honesty and singleness of mind; so much so, that a person who is really honest is already perfect. Insincerity was an evil which sprang up within the Church from the first.<sup>1</sup>*

Insincerity is an evil which springs up from within. Isn't that true! Little non-truths (perhaps not outright lies) and lack of sincerity gnaw at us, eroding relationships and trust.

If we consult our experience, we are hurt more by a loved one who is two-faced than by the more flagrant untruths of a stranger. Those closest to us can even cover insincerity by convincing themselves that their words are virtuous: "I was being kind when I said her talent was extraordinary. She will learn the truth when she interviews for the job."

Insincerity erodes from within because insincerity is a form of deceit. And one act of kind deception excuses the next act of deception, and the next...

It is sometimes difficult to be sincere – to say or do something that may not be well-received, especially by family members and peers. Yet, to avoid truth often leads to ambivalence or uncertainty, as one attempts to please others while avoiding an inner conviction.

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote about an adult who approaches the sacrament of Baptism insincerely – perhaps not believing in the sacrament's effects or receiving the sacrament with disdain. Baptism is received. Yet the baptized person's attitude inhibits the reception of grace. However, conversion of heart and the sacrament of Penance can remove this obstacle.<sup>2</sup>

Can you identify insincerity that undermines your relationship with our Lord or with others? God, who is Truth, draws us. How will you respond? †

<sup>1</sup> John Henry Newman, "Sermon 3: Unreal Words" in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1997), p. 978.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, Q. 69, A. 10.





## Keeping Christ at the **CENTER** of a busy week

**A**s Catholic parents, we have the privilege of leading our children to Jesus. We get to share the story of his love, mercy, redemption and salvation. Our children are a gift, and it's our job to set them on the path toward heaven.

God uses us as instruments of his grace, and asks us to help our children establish lives that make him the center. We love our kids and want to help them develop their God-given talents, so we do everything we can to foster and support them; but at what cost? As family stress escalates, it might be the perfect time to check our balance. If you feel that faith, prayer and opportunities for discipleship and moral development are falling short, here are some thoughts that may help.

### BEGIN WITH A WISE PERSPECTIVE.

A wise mother who had raised a fabulous faithful family offered this advice about finding time for family prayer and passing on the faith: "We make time for what we find important. We spend time daily reminding and nagging kids to brush their teeth. We haul them to the dentist and orthodontist. We invest time, money and energy into their teeth and don't really think about it. But their souls should be the absolute most important thing we focus on

as Catholic parents. Nobody gets to heaven because they have straight shiny teeth, they get there because of the condition of their soul, and as parents we have to teach them what that means."

**THE TRUTH.** Since there is no magic formula for adding minutes to the week so busy families can find time to focus on faith and prayer, we have to make important and often tough choices about how to prioritize and use the time we do have.

**FIND THE CENTER.** God should be at the center of everything we do – individually and as a family. Living a life that leads us to heaven is the ultimate goal of our existence, but sometimes we lose sight of that goal. Ask yourself, and ask your children,

if Christ is at the center of the activities on your weekly to-do list. If an activity isn't leading you or your children to Christ, or fulfilling God's will to help them become the best person they can be, perhaps it can be removed from the schedule to make room for things that do put Christ at the center.

### FOCUS ON THE BATTLE.

We can get caught up in stats and scores and performances and lose sight of the fact that the primary battle isn't about scholarships, playing time or advancement. The battle is for our souls. That sounds scary, but our children need people and activities and discussion that demonstrate the truth and teaching of our rich Catholic faith.

### EVERYTHING IS A LESSON.

The way we treat others, the way we process disappointment, react to an official's call or celebrate an achievement are all opportunities to include Christ and his teaching. There is a Gospel lesson in every trial, and every disagreement, and those conversations can be a part of everyday life. Use car time to process events and talk about places you see God working in your lives. Our greatest teaching tool is the way we live our lives as models of faith.

**SUNDAY START.** On the way home from Sunday Mass, each person can share one thing they gleaned from the Gospel or homily and set one goal for living out their faith that week. Checking in on each other's goals gives families a "faith conversation starter" for the whole week. ✦



#### SHERI WOHLFERT

is a Catholic school teacher, speaker, writer and founder of Joyful Words Ministries. Sheri blogs at [www.joyfulwords.org](http://www.joyfulwords.org).



# Picking dandelions



ChristinLola / iStock / Getty Images Plus

**D**andelions growing all over our yards are a familiar summer sight. As a child, I remember picking dandelions to bring to my mom. I proudly picked them and proudly offered them. My mom joyfully received them as if I had just picked a dozen roses.



**FATHER ANDY LAFRAMBOISE**

*is pastor of St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish in Reese and St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish in Vassar, and director of priestly vocations.*

*He holds a licentiate in Sacred Theology in Marriage and Family Studies from the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family.*

A dandelion is, of course, a weed. But my mother's love transformed it into something more. Gifts are transformed into something far greater when received by one who loves us— but they can only be transformed if they are offered.

For his pontificate, St. John Paul II took the motto *Totus Tuus* (totally yours) to express the entrustment of his mission to Mary. “From Mary we learn to surrender to God’s will in all things. From Mary we learn to trust even when all hope seems gone. From Mary we learn to love Christ, her Son and the Son of God,” he said.

Marian devotion is so important in our faith. This image of the dandelion helps me make sense of what Mary can do. When I give Mary my simple dandelions - my simple gesture of love - Mary can transform them.

This image helps us enter into the mystery of the Eucharist as well. At the Mass, we bring forth simple gifts of bread and wine, “the work of human hands” and we offer these to the Father, asking the Spirit to come down and transform them into the Body and Blood of our Lord.

Is it hard to pray? Is it hard to grow in virtue? Do you feel as if you have little to offer, as if what you have will make no difference in your life, in your family, in the world?

Often, we feel that what we have to offer is a weed or an imperfection that we think we would be better off without. Not always. Even St. Paul learned a beautiful lesson from Jesus about his weakness, “My grace is sufficient for you. Power is made perfect through weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). The Lord Jesus can make all things new. I encourage you to have Marian devotion part of your life of prayer. Many families have drawn close to the Lord through the praying of the rosary or other Marian devotions. With every “Hail Mary,” we are entrusting our simple gifts to the hands of Mary, confident that her love will transform them into something beautiful for the King of Kings. Mary teaches us how to gaze upon the face of Jesus. She teaches us how to persevere as a disciple of Jesus. From the cradle to the cross, her entire life is given to the Lord.

On Aug. 15, we celebrate Mary’s Assumption, body and soul, into heaven. This is our patronal feast for the Diocese of Saginaw. As we reflect on the fruits of the synod, discerning how the Lord is calling our Church to journey together in discipleship, let’s ask Mary to teach us how to gaze on Jesus, how to follow Jesus, how to be open to the will of the Father and docile to the Holy Spirit’s promptings.

In the Magnificat publication, there was a beautiful reflection from Caryl Houselander, a mid-20th century British artist and spiritual author. She said, “Too many anxious Christians today think that their efforts to preach and teach and enter into outward activities can do more to save the world than the surrender of their souls to God, to become Christ-bearers. They believe that they can do more than our Lady did, and they have not time to stop to consider the absurdity of this.”

When you find yourself frantic because of a full calendar, a life full of problems, or anxious about decisions that you need to make, remember to make this act of surrender. Pick the dandelions. Give them to Mary. She’ll help you receive the love of the Lord. †



# Creative penance

## invites contemplation on Christ's sacrificial love

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH

Linda Bryant went to confession in January 2018 to receive the grace of the sacrament. She didn't expect her penance would inspire her to return to an old hobby with greater meaning.

Linda Bryant painted "What Love Is" after being given the prayerful task as a penance.

"The penance was shocking," she said.

It wasn't a prayer or a work of mercy. It was to paint Christ.

Linda, a parishioner at St. Brigid of Kildare Parish in Midland, was attending an Encounter Ministries Conference at Christ the King Parish in Ann Arbor when she went to confession with Father Brian Gross, a visiting priest from North Dakota. During the sacrament, she and Father Brian prayerfully discussed how to move forward to avoid sin.

Naming our sins frees us from their power, explained Father Andy Booms, pastor at St. Brigid of Kildare Parish.

"When we are free, we can make better choices, and with God's grace we will!" he said. "(Penance) is not a punishment for having sinned. Penance is medicine to help us draw closer to God."

That truth was evident in Linda's confession and penance four years ago.

"(Father Brian) took me through, 'What does Jesus think about this (sin)? Let's pray. Let's bring Jesus into this and ask him what ... you might do about that,'" she said. Maybe, Linda suggested, I could start painting again.

Linda hadn't painted anything for nearly 40 years, so







Linda was inspired by “Cristo Crucificado,” a painting by Diego Velasquez. Her painting “What Love Is” features Christ’s partially obscured face as he hangs on the Cross.

Linda paints a portrait of the Sorrowful Mother in her Midland home.



she began with research.

“I took my penance seriously,” she said.

She ordered pastels, what she used to paint with, and drew inspiration from “Cristo Crucificado,” a painting by Diego Velasquez that she saw at the Museo Nacional del Prado while attending World Youth Day 2011 in Madrid.

“I always loved that crucifixion picture,” she said. “I think people need to think more about how (Jesus) suffered for each one of us individually, and the meaning behind it: out of total love for us. ... My heart is drawn to his passion and suffering.”

Over about a month’s time, a painting of Jesus on the cross took shape.

“I feel like the Holy Spirit had a hold of my hand,” she said.

As she worked, Linda listened to praise and worship music and prayed. She was particularly inspired by the song “Arms Wide Open” by Misty Edwards. “What does love look like?” is the question I’ve been pondering,” the lyrics begin. The song goes on to describe Jesus’ eyes looking at you as he hangs on the cross.

As if to answer the song’s opening question, Linda titled the painting “What Love Is.”

“In ‘What Love Is,’ Linda captures the crucifixion and the love that motivated Jesus

to face the brutality of the cross,” Father Andy said. “Love is a complex word, and so the drawing offers one of many subtle truths behind the glory of the cross. ... It is a lovely image (that) draws one into the heart of Christ and his love for us in his free gift of self.”

Father Andy said that religious art can lead the faithful closer to God, captivate our imagination and help us to pray and contemplate God who became man.

“The Holy Face of Jesus is just so precious to sit and gaze at,” Linda said.

In her painting, as in the Velasquez it’s based on, half of Jesus’ face is covered, hidden.

“He is hidden, and he wants us to find him! ... He wants you to seek him out,” she explained.

Linda knows well what it means to seek out God.

Growing up, her family attended a Methodist church occasionally, but religion wasn’t a big part of life. In adulthood, Linda experienced a health issue and felt a strong desire to pray.

“I was just crying out to God, and I felt this overwhelming ... peace, just love,” she described. “It’s overwhelming love. And nobody ever talked to me about that! ... To have it flood in you, God’s presence and peace— I just felt

overwhelmed. I didn’t know who to talk to.”

Linda decided to try the religious TV stations.

“I came across Mother Angelica, and she explained everything I was feeling,” Linda said. Mother Angelica was the religious sister who founded the Catholic network EWTN.

Linda asked the pastor at her former church about the questions she had from watching EWTN— Who was Jesus? What was the Eucharist?— but found her answers unsatisfactory.

“You know truth when you hear it,” Linda said. She began to devour Catholic books and media. “I just made up my mind: I really wanted to become a Catholic.”

Linda, along with her children Nicole and Jordan, entered the Catholic Church in 2002.

“I feel like just even coming into the Church has just been like God revealing himself to me,” Linda said. Since entering, she has become involved in the charismatic movement, enjoys participating in charismatic worship and is a student at the Encounter School of Ministry in Brighton. “I feel like the Lord is opening myself up to the ... gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it’s all for his glory.”

Linda’s involvement with the charismatic movement is what led her to the Encounter Ministries Conference confession line.

Since receiving her penance to paint Christ, Linda has continued to combine artistry with her faith. The unique penance atoned for sin, but also helped establish a prayerful new practice. Linda has created floral crosses and is painting the Sorrowful Mother.

Earlier this year, an artist friend suggested that Linda make prayer cards, which she did. She believes the Lord led her to the phrase “loved beyond measure,” for the back of the card. It is a summary of Ephesians 3:19. She got hundreds printed, and they have been placed in parishes around the area with pastors’ permissions.

The Scripture-based phrase matches with the meaning of the painting and her hope that it will lead others to contemplate Jesus’ great love for all.

“Every love that you have— for your kids, for your spouse— (God’s) love is even greater,” she said. “It is so beautiful.” †



# SPEAKING LIFE:

## WISE ADVICE FROM AN EMMY WINNER

"TobyMac" by Orange\_Beard is licensed under CC BY 2.0.



*Note: The Church is taking concrete steps to do even more to "Speak Life." Dioceses throughout the U.S., including ours, are taking part in an initiative called "Walking with Moms in Need," encouraging Catholic parishes and communities to accompany local pregnant and parenting women in need. For more information, visit [Saginaw.org/moms](http://Saginaw.org/moms).*



**DR. DAN OSBORN**

*is the Diocesan Theologian and Coordinator of Permanent Diaconate Formation & Ministry for the Diocese of Saginaw.*

Since the overturning of the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion in the U.S., I have been reflecting on what it means to be fully "pro-life" as Catholic Christians. Recently, my thoughts have turned to arguably the greatest thinker the world has ever seen, as well as to an Emmy-winning artist who shares the Good News through his music.

### THE CHURCH DOES NOT TEACH SCIENCE

It's not at the same level of reading Scripture every day, but one worthwhile practice is to frequently read a section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (the

CCC). If you do, I promise you won't find a sentence like this one from a medical textbook: "The development of a human begins with fertilization, a process by which the spermatozoon from the male and the oocyte from the female unite to give rise to a new organism, the zygote."<sup>1</sup> No – the Church is not called to teach science, though she is very much called to teach about the moral dimensions of scientific developments (the problem with in vitro fertilization, for example).

You won't find this statement in official Catholic teaching: "Human personhood begins at conception." The Church is actually quite careful in the way she states her teaching on the moral obligation to protect human life in the womb. Here is what Vatican II says: "Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the CCC states that "human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception"<sup>3</sup> – and "since it must be treated from conception as a person, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being."<sup>4</sup> As you see, the Church takes great pains to avoid teaching science. The Church's teachings stick to faith and morals.

When it comes to the issue of abortion, I recall a vivid example from my moral theology class in Rome. Let's say it is Nov. 15 and you are out hunting. You hear a rustling in the bushes but can't quite make out whether it's a deer or your mother-in-law. If there is any doubt whatsoever, you are morally required to not pull the trigger. The same is true about human life in the womb. Since there is a definite possibility that the human life just conceived is a human person, we are morally prohibited from choosing abortion. Human life "must be treated from conception as a person," the Church teaches. And as scientists are discovering how early after conception a totally unique human DNA is present, this moral mandate becomes all the more confirmed.

## THE SEAMLESS GARMENT

The late Cardinal Joseph Bernadin is famous for his plea for a consistent ethic of life. He pointed out that “the spectrum of life cuts across the issues of genetics, abortion, capital punishment, modern warfare and the care of the terminally ill.” The image he used to sum up this unified pro-life approach is “the seamless garment.” Not long after he introduced this symbol, Cardinal Bernadin became concerned about how “the seamless garment” image was being used. In a 1988 interview he lamented: “I know that some people...have used the consistent ethic to give the impression that the abortion issue is not all that important any more, that you should be against abortion in a general way but that there are more important issues, so don’t hold anyone’s feet to the fire just on abortion. That is a misuse of the consistent ethic, and I deplore it.”

After all, even a seamless garment begins with a single, principle thread – and that thread is the preborn child’s right to life. If her or his life is terminated in the womb, then other life issues such as the dignity of immigrants and the immorality of euthanasia never come into play for that individual.

## TOBYMAC AND THE ANGELIC DOCTOR

In the Letter of James, we read that “no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings who are made in the likeness of God.”<sup>5</sup> I remember the look on students’ faces when our professor in Rome said: “In his Summa of theology, St. Thomas Aquinas actually has a lot more to say about sins of speech than he does about sexual sins.” This saint, who is called the Angelic Doctor because his teachings are so sublime, reminds us that unless it is absolutely necessary to divulge something harmful to another person’s good name and reputation, we are morally prohibited from doing so.

This teaching is based on love (willing the good of another) and justice (giving

## “LIFT YOUR HEAD A LITTLE HIGHER / SPREAD THE LOVE LIKE FIRE / HOPE WILL FALL LIKE RAIN / WHEN YOU SPEAK LIFE WITH THE WORDS YOU SAY.”

- TOBYMAC

to others what is due to them). We may only divulge such information for an objectively valid reason, and only to someone who has responsibility or oversight, such as a parent, police officer or employer. Otherwise, saying something harmful about another person (such as through gossiping) is decidedly “anti-life,” since our words can do irreparable damage to another person’s life. This is true whether our harmful words are actually true (the sin of detraction) or not true (the more serious sin of calumny).

As the CCC explains: “Respect for the reputation of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury. He becomes guilty:

- of *rash judgment* who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor;
- of *detraction* who, without objectively valid reason, discloses another’s faults and failings to persons who did not know them;
- of *calumny* who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them.”<sup>6</sup>

Pope Francis has talked about gossip and abortion in similar ways these past few years. He compares gossip to the action of a terrorist who walks in a room, leaves a bomb, and then walks away before the damage starts to be inflicted. And he compares the decision to abort a child to “hiring a hitman” in order to dispose of someone we do not want around.

While our speech can sadly be “anti-life,” our call as Christians is to actively “Speak Life,” which is the title of a beautiful song by the Christian singer

TobyMac. If you have a moment, please consider watching this music video, which shows people experiencing pain through the words of others. A piano-playing boy gets bullied by his sports-loving peers. A young wife gets verbally abused by her husband. But then we see an angelic little girl leaning over to whisper words of encouragement and affirmation to them— words that, in a sense, bring them back to life. TobyMac’s song and video creatively promote a culture of life by drawing attention to the power of loving words. As the video ends, we read this profound reminder: “In every encounter we either give life or drain it; there is no neutral exchange.” Even our words to those who are in favor of abortion should be marked by gentleness and love if there is to be any chance of them having a change of heart.

In the aftermath of the June 24 Supreme Court decision to leave behind *Roe v. Wade*, TobyMac’s lyrics have also made me think of women going through crisis pregnancies – and the tender words they deserve to hear:

*Well, it's crazy to imagine / Words from my lips as the arms of compassion*

*Mountains crumble with every syllable / Hope can live or die*

*So speak life, speak life...*

*Look into the eyes of the broken hearted*

*Watch them come alive as soon as you speak hope*

*You speak love, you speak...life. †*

1 Langman’s Medical Embryology, 7th ed.

2 Gaudium et spes, 51.

3 CCC 2270

4 CCC 2274

5 Jas 3:7-9

6 CCC 2477



# 'GO WHERE THE SPIRIT LEADS'

*Diocesan coordinator of  
evangelization says we are  
primed for a 'culture of  
evangelization'*

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH







## cover story

**D**on Buchalski sees his whole mission in Jesus' Great Commission: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).

The desire to bring others to Jesus brought him out of early retirement from Dow Corning and into the diocesan lay ministry program. He then served as a missionary for the Archdiocese of Detroit before discerning a call to apply for the newly-created position of coordinator of evangelization for the Diocese of Saginaw.

His first assignment in the evangelization role was to oversee the diocesan synodal process.

Don sees how listening to people from across the diocese has readied him for the work ahead. During the synodal process, he heard a widespread call for faith formation and evangelization—a call that he is ready to answer.

### COMMITTING TO CHRIST

Growing up, Don's family was involved at St. Michael's Church in Pinconning, and he attended the parochial elementary school, serving at daily Mass. He then attended public school and remained active in his parish.

"Middle school was a time when I remember struggling with my faith, when I saw some people I knew doing drugs and moving away from the Church," he recalled. "I remember meeting Bishop Ken Untener after he was appointed Bishop of Saginaw, and his charisma drew me to stay active in the church. During high school, the church youth group was my comfort zone where I was able to grow my faith and personal relationship with Jesus."





As coordinator of evangelization, Don Buchalski works with parishes to discern the best evangelization strategy for their flock.

Don was active at St. Albert the Great University Parish while attending Michigan Technological University in Houghton, Michigan. He liked to party with friends, but continued faithfully attending church. He moved to Midland after graduation and joined Blessed Sacrament Parish. He also met his future wife, Chris.

"She was not Catholic but had a strong faith in Jesus, which caused me to evaluate what being a Christian versus being a Catholic meant," he said. "We agreed that we wanted to grow in our faith together and needed to find a church that worked for both of us. Exploring religion together helped me to grow in my faith and learning from Chris' early faith journey

has given me a stronger appreciation of the Bible."

They visited different churches, and eventually Chris attended Blessed Sacrament Parish, where she describes being welcomed where she was. She began RCIA (the Rite of Christian Initiation, now OCIA), and she converted to Catholicism. The two married and began raising a family.

Don experienced a defining moment early in his marriage when a family member suffered from alcoholism. Don did his best to help the family member, who was in and out of rehab. Sadly, the family member was never able to overcome addiction to alcohol. Don realized he needed to make a change himself.

"I made that real

commitment that my faith and my family were going to be the center of my life," he said.

Since then, that's what he has done. He dove deeper into his faith. He and Chris trusted in the Lord by committing to a life of stewardship, offering their time, treasure and talent to the Church and other organizations—and discovering that God always provides. Don said he attributes their family's strong faith life to committing that God would be "the center of our home".

### SENSING A CALL

One day, Chris began reading "Forming Intentional Disciples" by Sherry A. Weddell and recommended

it to Don. That sparked a passion for evangelization.

Don devoured evangelization books and excitedly shared ideas with Chris during their evening walks.

"All of a sudden, it was pouring out of him," she recalled. "That's all he would talk about. He would talk about evangelizing and how different people need different things. ... He couldn't hold it in. And I thought, 'You need someplace to funnel that. You're overflowing!'"

Don answered the call to join the lay ministry formation program along with Chris in 2017, and they were commissioned in 2021.

"As I read more and more of these books, I started to see more of what the crisis was



## WE JUST NEED TO LIVE OUT OUR BAPTISMAL CALL OF THE GREAT COMMISSION, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL WORK TO GROW THE CHURCH.”



The Buchalski family includes Don, Zac, Katie, Josh, wife Chris, Joe and Billy. *Courtesy photo*

in the Church, ... not having the young people and young adults. We're an aging church. Churches were closing. And that kind of hit my heart," he said. He made a decision. "I need to see how I can contribute to help."

"He was actively searching for some way to use this [passion for evangelization]," Chris said. "He said, 'God's put me on this path for a reason at this time— And I wish he would show me!'"

He began working as a missionary in the Archdiocese of Detroit. At first, Don thought that we needed to learn how to "revitalize the Church."

"Now I realize ... We just need to live out our baptismal call of the Great Commission, and the Holy Spirit will work to grow the Church," he said.

### WINNING SOULS FOR CHRIST

Don believes he already sees the Holy Spirit at work.

Missionary disciples are formed by first bringing people to Jesus, building up their faith and knowledge, and then sending them out on mission to begin the cycle again. Don summarizes it as "win, build, send."

To win souls for Christ, the faithful must build trust and curiosity in others so their hearts are open to the message of Jesus. Then, they must commit to following Christ. The 'build' phase begins with teaching what we as Catholics believe, then moves through why we believe these things. With this firm foundation of faith, these disciples can become leaders helping others grow in relationship with Jesus.

### SYNOD UNCOVERS DESIRE FOR EVANGELIZATION

Don believes it was providential that he was tasked with leading the synod effort, as it helped him understand more about the people of the Diocese and their desire to learn about evangelization.

"I think the number one thing that I learned is that it's about listening, not talking," he explained. "Most people want to be able to tell their story to us and tell us where they're at. And then have us relate how God fits into that story."

The synod reinforced the importance of supporting parishes' evangelization efforts.

"The parish is where the heartbeat of the Church is at," he said. "I feel my role is to help equip the parishes to be evangelizers ... helping the leadership of the parishes to develop a culture of evangelization."

A culture of evangelization includes being inviting and hospitable, bringing people to Christ, deepening their understanding of the Faith and then supporting and accompanying them as missionary disciples.

"[The decision to follow Jesus] is where we touch people's hearts," he said. "Once Jesus touches their heart and they give their life to Jesus, everything else is just a process to get them to the point where they're missionary disciples. ... They want to give back to

Jesus because of everything that he's done for them, how he suffered and died and gives them a chance at eternal life."

### "GO WHERE THE SPIRIT LEADS US"

Synod reports across the diocese expressed a desire to reach out to others, but also recognized a need for guidance in effective evangelization. (See related story, page 18.) Parishes asked for advice and direction on how to be successful.

That's where Don, as coordinator of evangelization, comes in. He's currently partnering with Father Nate Harburg and his envisioning team at Good Shepherd Parish in Ubly/Argyle/Sheridan Corners.

Don points out that evangelization models are not one-size-fits-all. Parishes should offer opportunities for people at different stages in their faith journeys. For example, many churches will focus on the "growing disciples" stage by offering Bible studies or classes. This is a good and important piece of the puzzle— but parishes will likely see the same attendees at all the events. By intentionally providing opportunities for people at different stages, parishes will be more well-rounded in their offerings and reach more parishioners.

"It's not going to happen all at once, but we can get started somewhere and continue to go where the Spirit leads us." ✚



# DIOCESAN SYNOD

## REPORT reveals themes to direct future planning for the Diocese

BY ERIN LOOBY CARLSON AND  
DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH



**295** LISTENING  
SESSIONS



**61** INDIVIDUAL  
REPORTS



**55** PARISHES  
REPRESENTED



**6** ADDITIONAL  
GROUPS

↓  
Priests, deacons, directors of  
parish life, religious orders,  
Catholic schools and fringe groups



**3,600** PARTICIPANTS  
(approximately)

In addition to parishioners, several specific groups were included:

Pastoral and finance councils; intellectual and developmental disabilities groups; youth, teens and young adults; nursing home residents; parish groups; jail ministry, ecumenical and interfaith groups; members of the Black and Hispanic communities; Ascension Hospital; Saginaw Latin Mass Association; Mid-Michigan Homeschoolers; Ezekiel Project; Mexican American Council; Hispanic Advisory Commission; Mustard Seed Ministry; pastors of non-Catholic Christian communities; St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church and members of the Hindu and Sikh faiths.



**A**fter Pope Francis convoked Synod 2023: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission” on Oct. 10, 2021, the Diocese of Saginaw got to work to fulfill the diocesan phase of the synod, following the recommendations of the Vatican and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

From January to April 2022, trained parish coordinators from across the diocese planned and conducted listening sessions with Catholic faithful, clergy and those from communities both within and outside of the Catholic Church. Each parish/group coordinator compiled a report of the listening sessions’ discussions, and then teams within the Diocesan Synodal Team further synthesized the reports by vicariate (geographic region) and/or area of responsibility.

These reports were studied and discussed in detail as the Diocesan Synodal Report Drafting Team began to write. The team prayerfully drew out the following 10 key themes that surfaced during the listening sessions held throughout the diocese:

## • TEN KEY THEMES IN DIOCESE OF SAGINAW REPORT

- Merging and closure of parishes
- Distrust of the diocese and global Church
- Clergy sex abuse scandal locally and globally
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the life of parish and parishioners
- Youth and young adults missing from parishes
- Priestly and religious vocations crisis
- Need for evangelization
- Welcoming and outreach
- Desire for adult formation and deepening of Faith
- Desire for liturgy that leads to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ

Those involved in the synod called upon the Holy Spirit to guide the process every step of the way, from listening sessions to the process of reading, synthesizing and writing the reports. Every voice was heard. The full Diocesan Synod Report is available at [www.saginaw.org](http://www.saginaw.org) and was sent to the United States Conference of

Catholic Bishops on June 30. Diocesan reports from all across the United States will be reviewed and synthesized into regional reports, and the process will continue through the continental and universal phases, culminating with the Synod of Bishops in October 2023.

While the worldwide Synod of Bishops will seek to discern where the Lord is calling the universal Catholic Church, the Diocesan Synod Report will have a local impact much sooner. Bishop Gruss has expressed a strong desire to address the needs discussed in the listening sessions which are actionable and within his authority. The synod report will also play an important role in future pastoral planning by Bishop Gruss and his advisors. The Diocese will continue to seek to understand God’s plan with the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we continue down the path the synod has set us upon.

The following is a synopsis of each of the 10 key themes presented in our Diocesan Synod Report. The text italicized is quoted directly from parish or vicariate (regional) reports.

## • MERGING AND CLOSING OF PARISHES

Parish mergers across the Diocese of Saginaw, which were announced in 2013 and ultimately led to the closure of some churches and schools, were broadly discussed. Nearly a decade after the mergers began, the wounds are described as still very raw and in need of healing.

Listening session participants expressed anger over the Diocese’s perceived lack of transparency regarding the mergers, which they believed caused division among those forced to come together. In addition, frustration regarding the

way the mergers were handled, parish name changes, loss of parish identity, sacraments of initiation being administered in the parish church and not in additional church locations and related issues were described as barriers for parishioners to grow and share their faith.

*Many of the parish leaders are seeking unity in their parish, but many parishioners are still too hurt to move on and are clinging to their previous church or identity.*





## • DISTRUST OF THE DIOCESE AND GLOBAL CHURCH

Participants noted a general breakdown in relationship between the parish communities and the diocese. They shared feelings of being disconnected and expressed a lack of trust. They also voiced a desire to be seen, particularly with visits by the bishop to their parishes. These feelings were not isolated to the local Diocese. Participants also described feelings of abandonment and a lack of trust regarding the global Catholic Church.

## • CLERGY SEX ABUSE SCANDAL LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

The wounds resulting from the clergy sex abuse scandals, both locally and globally, still resonate with parishioners across the diocese. As one vicariate reported:

*The broadest issue mentioned was the priest sexual abuse scandal and the lack of transparency and feeling of abandonment of the hierarchy of the larger Church.*

The sex abuse scandals have resulted in feelings of resentment, mistrust and even resistance when it comes to a relationship between parishes and the diocese.

Estranged Catholics reported feeling scandalized by both the clergy sex abuse crisis and the parish mergers, prompting some to leave for non-denominational Christian churches.

## • IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE LIFE OF PARISH AND PARISHIONERS

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present many challenges for parish communities regarding participation and re-engaging parishioners. Some participants described feeling isolated or abandoned during the height of the pandemic, and many others continue to feel the emotional impacts. As of May 2022, Mass attendance has not resumed to pre-pandemic levels, which commenters noted. The desire for gatherings that were more commonly offered prior to COVID-19 was also mentioned.

## • YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS MISSING FROM PARISHES

Each report specifically mentioned youth and young adults as the largest missing demographic in their parish communities. Most also stated they didn't know how to reach out to young people, but desire a multigenerational parish.

For their part, young people surveyed in Catholic schools stated they want to be a part of the Church and have an active part in liturgies, including liturgies with people in their age groups.

Some parishes stated the importance of intentionally including teens in parish life. Young people in one parish surveyed shared they are looking to get involved in social justice projects.

Synod participants realize that a multigenerational parish is the result of effective outreach and creating a welcoming community. Many want family and social events for people of all ages and stages. There is also a desire for small faith-sharing groups.

Across all age groups, parishioners desired increased involvement and participation in Mass, outreach and fellowship activities.



## • PRIESTLY AND RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS CRISIS

The decline in vocations to the priesthood and religious life is a critical issue. Most vicariates noted the need for more priests and religious and appear to be ready to address the issue in earnest.

The availability of a priest and a priest's relationship with parishioners is important. The listening sessions revealed the need to alleviate administrative burdens on priests, allowing them more time to minister to those entrusted to their spiritual care. There is also confusion regarding the roles and duties of deacons/directors of parish life who are working in place of or in partnership with a priest.

The role of the laity was mentioned in the vicariate reports, but more specifically discussed in the clergy report. Although the clergy believe the Diocese is doing a good job promoting involvement of laypeople, there was a sense from some that it has "gone backwards" in recent years regarding church leadership and liturgy.

A listening session with some of the Diocese's permanent deacons demonstrated the joys the men have found in their unique role in the Church.

Although the synod does not foresee changes in Church teaching, many support the idea of married priests and women priests and deacons to address the issue.

## • NEED FOR EVANGELIZATION

Evangelization was explicitly or implicitly mentioned across the Diocese. Parishes expressed the desire to reach out and bring back youth, young adults, family members, fallen-away Catholics and victims of abuse. Participants also recognized their need for guidance in effective evangelization. Parishes asked for advice and direction on how to be successful.

A bright spot for evangelization was highlighted in the clergy report:

*... newly ordained priests seem focused on evangelization and have energy and excitement about the possibilities of where the Church could go and how it can welcome into the fold those that have fallen away from the Church.*



## • WELCOMING AND OUTREACH

Every vicariate report noted the importance of inclusivity and welcoming of all people of every ethnicity, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, as well as divorced and remarried people, fallen-away Catholics, post-abortive parents, victims of abuse (particularly abuse by clergy) and youth and young adults. Participants believe a Church diverse in her people and their experiences would be stronger.

*Overwhelmingly, the desire to be a more welcoming and inclusive Church was cited as a critical action to move the Church into the future.*

While numerous individual parishes received positive feedback toward their efforts to reach out and welcome, there was a desire expressed in all vicariate reports for a more welcoming Church and a call for greater outreach. Outreach necessitates a personal invitation to others.

Many specifically spoke of the need to further explain the Church's teaching on marriage and annulments, in addition to welcoming and supporting divorced Catholics. One vicariate mentioned divorced participants feel the annulment process should be easier and become a place of healing.

Another area which identified a need for compassionate outreach is regarding the LGBTQ+ community. Several parishes shared that this is a topic both younger and older members of their parish communities are passionate about.

Listening sessions with fallen-away Catholics especially spoke to the need for greater outreach in the Catholic Church. For example, one woman who identifies as Catholic but no longer attends Mass noted that when she stopped attending church, no one at her parish or the priest contacted her. While she expressed a desire to return, she said she lacks the personal invitation and support she feels she needs.

Outreach extends to non-Catholics, as well. In a multicultural listening session, participants:

*...expressed dismay that area Catholics would readily give charity but without forging any personal ties, without inviting them to 'come and see' or pray with/fellowship with them. They wondered why we were so insular and didn't invite non-Catholics to even attend Catholic events or celebrations.*



## • DESIRE FOR ADULT FORMATION AND DEEPENING OF FAITH

The synod uncovered a significant desire and need among Catholics to learn more about the Faith. A strong desire for adult faith formation was expressed, beyond what is already offered for children and youth. Participants struggle with passing on the Faith to their children and explaining and defending the Faith, especially considering the social issues of the day.

Participants recognize the need to better understand the basic tenets of the Catholic Faith, including Mass, the sacraments and Church history. There is also a desire for clarity. Writes one vicariate:

*There was an especially strong theme of wanting to understand the Mass and Eucharist better. Another theme was the basic understanding of the faith, especially considering current events and the current culture so parishioners can be clear on misconceptions or misrepresentations on what the Church believes. LGBTQ+, divorced/remarried [people], immigration and those who have had an abortion were specific topics mentioned.*

Through efforts surrounding education and deepening spirituality, it was stated, the diocese could better serve those in all stages of their faith journeys.

Groups of Catholic school students also said they want practical applications of faith and to understand the reasons behind Catholic teaching. They want to grow in faith as well as knowledge.

Despite criticisms against specific policies, the Diocese and/or the institutional Church, many participants expressed a love of their parish and their faith. They are looking for more: more reverence, more encounters with Jesus, more evangelization.



## • DESIRE FOR LITURGY THAT LEADS TO A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

A frequently reported comment from youth and young adults was the need for liturgies that speak to them through upbeat and inspiring music, relatable and energetic homilies and authentic messaging that leads to deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Participants of all ages mentioned that homilies should speak to the issues of the day and be applicable to their lives.

*Everyone across the vicariate agrees that liturgy, music, sacraments and other prayer experiences are critical for developing faith. While the style of liturgy and music varies across the vicariate, most believe they are already doing it well, but all agreed improvements can still be made.*

Several sessions also positively mentioned eucharistic adoration and that worship and the sacraments are an important part of building an unapologetically Catholic culture. While the report makes clear individuals have differing preferences on liturgical worship, all recognize the importance of liturgy to their faith life.

## Synod data will inform future plans

Bishop Gruss and the diocesan leadership have listened to the people of God. The genuine desire for a thriving, strong and authentically Catholic diocese is evident and the thoughtful feedback provided will help in discerning a path forward.

With the important information and insights gathered throughout the synod, the Diocese of Saginaw is better positioned to identify and serve the needs of the faithful. While much more needs to be done to address the feedback in this report, especially in the area of healing, several current initiatives are good starting points.

The National Eucharistic Revival will begin to address the desire for formation by addressing the need for education on the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of our Faith.

Further, the diocesan re-envisioning process is in progress and has identified some of the needs expressed in the synod. A coordinator for evangelization was hired (see preceding story), and vicariate liaisons were appointed to improve relationships between the Diocese and the parishes (see article in *FAITH Saginaw's* Issue 1, 2022: Diocesan re-envisioning process focuses on better serving parishes).

The Diocese has announced Catholic schools as a priority and a commitment to Catholic identity. As reported in the previous issue of *FAITH Saginaw*, some individual schools have begun acting on excellent ideas that students mentioned during the synodal listening sessions.

Guided by the Holy Spirit and informed by this wealth of information, Bishop Gruss and diocesan and parish leaders look forward to a new springtime in the Diocese of Saginaw. †



TO READ THE FULL DIOCESAN SYNOD REPORT as it was sent to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, please visit [www.saginaw.org](http://www.saginaw.org).





# DEACON MATTHEW GEMBROWSKI

## *ordained to transitional diaconate*

BY ERIN CARLSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH

**D**eacon Matthew Gembrowski, a seminarian for the Diocese of Saginaw, received the sacrament of Holy Orders when Bishop Robert Gruss ordained him to the transitional diaconate at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw on Friday, May 13.

“Matthew, in being ordained a deacon, the grace of God will radically conform you to Christ the Servant, one who came not to be served, but to serve,” said Bishop Gruss during his homily message.

Bishop Gruss then referenced a note of thanks Deacon Matthew shared with the faithful of the Diocese.

“As you yourself have said, ‘My vocation is not meant for me, but is to be shared with all of you, God’s Holy People.’ May this truly be the way you live your life, knowing that the Lord will always be your example,” Bishop Gruss said.

In his note to the faithful, Deacon Matthew went on to say, “I ask you to continue to assist me by your prayers. Pray that I may become the saint God created me to be, and a true servant – a true diakonos – for all, especially for the poor, the marginalized, and the outcast.”

Bishop Gruss encouraged Deacon Matthew to seek to do the will of God in charity from the heart.

“Serve others with joy as you would serve the Lord,” he said.

Deacon Matthew will continue his preparation, completing his final year at Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois, with hopes of being ordained a priest next year. †

1. Deacon Matthew with his mother Sharon Gembrowski.

2. Bishop Robert Gruss smiles as he ordains Deacon Matthew Gembrowski to the transitional diaconate.



3. Bishop Robert Gruss lays hands on Deacon Matthew Gembrowski and calls down the Holy Spirit as he says the Prayer of Ordination.

ordination



4. Father Matt Federico and Father Richard Jozwiak invest deacon Matthew Gembrowski with a stole and dalmatic, the liturgical garments of a deacon.

5. Deacon Matthew Gembrowski lifts the chalice during the Eucharistic Prayer.



# “Team Thelen” makes Y.E.S. a family affair



MAIN: Glenn Thelen and three of his children, Emily, Danielle and Zach, participated in Youth Encounter Service 2022. Glenn and Emily served as team leaders, and Danielle was a youth leader. It was Zach's first time volunteering with the program.

(Page 23, clockwise)

Ryan McDonell scrapes old paint off the siding.

Ethan Wiedyk trims shrubs outside the Mustard Seed Shelter in Saginaw.

Sarah DeLong and Maze Gusa clean and prepare a room for an expecting mother at Mustard Seed Shelter in Saginaw.

Saginaw District Court Judge Elian Fichtner explains her role as a judge.

Youth Encounter Service participants repair and beautify a Saginaw home, making it safer and more energy-efficient. Fresh paint protects the siding from harsh weather.

**G**lenn Thelen remembers when his daughter Emily first came home after participating in Youth Encounter Service (Y.E.S.) in 2015.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH

“She really embraced Y.E.S.! She came home and was really chatting up Y.E.S.,” he recalled. “[Her siblings] saw Emily’s excitement.”

This year, four of the six members of the Thelen family participated in Y.E.S. (one sibling is not yet old enough to join.) The Thelens are members of Nativity of the Lord Parish and St. Louis residents.

Y.E.S. is a weeklong immersion service experience during which high school-aged youth and adult volunteers learn about and combat poverty by volunteering at outreach organizations and by working on the exterior of the home of a low-income individual. In the evenings, they pray together and learn about Catholic social teaching. Throughout the day, they are challenged to consider how poverty affects those in their own communities.

Nikki Bakos, Y.E.S. director, said the

group of youth are excited to learn how to do the tasks at hand and learn about Catholic social teaching, a beautiful but lesser-known aspect of the Faith.

“My staff live our Catholic social teaching. This is the ultimate experience of it and sharing of it,” she said.

The family’s involvement began when Glenn volunteered as a team leader in 2014, and encouraged his oldest daughter to participate. She did, and loved it so much she was invited back to be a youth leader the following two years, until she aged out of the program.

“I really loved it, especially going to all the agencies,” Emily said. “I really like meeting our homeowners. They have such pride as homeowners!”

She recalled one year when a homeowner, whose house had been fixed up the previous year, came to mow the yard of the house the Y.E.S. volunteers

were working at, paying forward the kindness he had received.

Now Emily is old enough to serve as an adult team leader, and she’s excited to be back with two of her younger siblings.

Danielle, an incoming senior at St. Louis High School, is a youth leader like Emily was. This is her second year participating, and Y.E.S. has had an impact on her that reaches far beyond the week’s project.

“Y.E.S. really proved I wanted to do something to help people,” she said. Danielle is pursuing a career in nursing and is already taking classes to reach that goal. “Y.E.S. has really helped shape relationships with people and my view of poverty.”

Changing how participants view poverty is a key goal of Y.E.S. Youth volunteer at community outreach organizations, including Mustard Seed





Shelter, Eastside Soup Kitchen and the Partnership Center, where they clean, do yard work and distribute food. This year, Saginaw District Court Judge Elian Fichtner invited the youth into her courtroom to observe and explain how the criminal justice system tries to keep the community safe while ensuring those accused of a crime receive due process, a fair trial and the resources they may need.

Education about poverty and Catholic social teaching is also integral to the week. On Tuesday, youth packed their usual lunch, but were later told they would be participating in a “hunger awareness meal,” nicknamed H.A.M. Each team is allotted \$1.52 per person (the average SNAP allotment) to purchase a balanced meal. As families may not always have the inexpensive means to get to the best places to shop for groceries, teams were to purchase their meals at a local convenience store. They also had very limited cooking supplies with which to prepare their meal.

Emily and Danielle’s younger brother Zach, an incoming freshman, is participating for the first time simply

because his family recommended it.

“I’ve enjoyed painting [the house] and seeing the fruit of my labor,” he said. “I’m glad it looks good and we put in the work to make it look good.”

The home that the youth work on benefits from more than just new paint. By scraping away the old paint and applying a new, quality paint to the wooden exterior, they protect the siding from rot. They also caulk and glaze windows and replace insulation plugs to reduce drafts and make the home more energy-efficient. Safety is also an important consideration, said Nikki. The Y.E.S. team ensures all porch lights and locks work, as well as replace house numbers with reflective ones.

The homeowner has stated that he wants to “age in place,” that is, remain in his home as long as he is able. Therefore, volunteers also built safe porch steps, sealed the lumber and added treads and handrails. The homeowner, in his 80s, can no longer clean out his gutters, so they also put gutter guards on his house.

“If we’re going to do a job, we’re going to do it right. We don’t cut corners,”

Nikki said. “Anything we do is not a Band-Aid.”

The Y.E.S. staff, which includes experienced adults and a former home inspector, examines the house closely for any potential issues as well, such as insect holes in the siding, to be repaired.

“It’s looking at the little things that can become big things,” Nikki said.

Zach added that he’s learned about poverty and the everyday stresses for those experiencing it.

“You can’t even focus on working outside, you have to focus on getting enough food and if you can afford heating,” he remarked.

Y.E.S. helps to alleviate that burden on house upkeep.

Zach also said he’s happy he’s participating with his older sisters and dad, though they are on different teams. He added that all the participants and leaders have been “really nice and made it fun.”

“Team Thelen,’ part of our job is we go back to our parish and get them fired up,” Glenn said. “It’s easy to promote [Y.E.S.] when you’re doing it, because you’re walking the walk.” †



# THUMB CATHOLICS CELEBRATE FAITH IN ANNUAL *Rural Life Mass*



Area Catholics filled the Thumb Octagon Barn to celebrate a Rural Life Mass on May 21.

Thumb Catholics had the opportunity to grow in faith and fellowship at the annual Rural Life Mass at the Thumb Octagon Barn near Gagetown. Bishop Robert Gruss celebrated the Mass and blessed seeds representing a variety of crops grown in the region.

STORY BY DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF SCHRIER

“The Mass on May 21 at the Octagon Barn was a beautiful, visible expression of the faith of Catholics living in the Thumb gathered in unity around their principal shepherd, the Bishop, giving thanks to God for his many gifts, and in humble supplication for those blessings to continue,” said Father Stephen Blaxton, pastor of Holy Family Parish, Sandusky/Marlette/Peck.

Holy Family Parish serves as the

Thumb Vicariate (a geographic region, also known as Vicariate 1) chapter of Catholic Rural Life, a national organization with chapters across the country. The Rural Life Mass is the centerpiece of the chapter’s celebration of Catholic rural culture. While the hope is that CRL chapters will eventually exist in each vicariate throughout the Diocese, the Thumb Vicariate is the first.

“Bishop Gruss is on the board of

Catholic Rural Life and has created this new ministry in our diocese. He has a passion for rural life and for the families that are stewards of the earth that belongs to God,” said Lori Becker, coordinator of diocesan outreach.

During the Mass, Bishop Gruss prayed over the collection of seeds and sprinkled holy water over them.

“The Blessings of the Seeds is a tradition in which farmers break from



From left to right: Thomas Alexander, Shaquile Nelson, Ashley Nelson, Christine Alexander and Kelly Markel participate in the Rural Life Mass.

their daily routine to gather with the community to praise God for His creation. They bring a small amount of the seeds to be planted with the prayer that they may sprout and be nurtured with water until harvest time,” Lori explained.

The Mass’s venue, the Thumb Octagon Barn, brought the liturgy into a new space, which helped encourage some to return to Mass, Father Stephen said.

“I think it’s difficult for many Catholics to get out of the ‘COVID routine’ of watching a live-streamed Mass from home. For whatever reason, events like the Rural Life Mass are often a catalyst in getting people back to church. There was one couple at the Mass who hadn’t been to church since before COVID. There was another gentleman who struggled to walk into a Catholic church because of difficulties he’d had with the Church in the past. Having Mass in a barn somehow met him where he was at, and God used it in a powerful way. He was moved to tears during the Mass and has been coming to Mass on Sundays more consistently,” he said.

The Mass also gave the faithful an opportunity to celebrate Mass with the Bishop close to home.

“Bishop [Gruss] believes in meeting people where they are and celebrating Mass in their environment,” Lori said.

Father Stephen said the Mass was a truly special occasion.

“I think what it meant for people who attended is that God is with them, the Bishop is with them, and they have each other,” he said. “Others said there was something special happening that they couldn’t quite figure out, but that it was manifest in the beauty of the congregation united in song in such a cathedral-like barn with beautiful acoustics.”

Following the Mass, those gathered shared a luncheon and listened to a



presentation from Catholic Rural Life staff member Tim Streif—who noted that of all the Rural Life Masses he had attended around the country, this one was the largest.

Holy Family Parish’s Rural Life Mass included members from Good Shepherd Parish, Ubyly/Argyle/Sheridan Corners; Our Lady Consolata Parish, Cass City/Gagetown/Sebewaing; Ave Maria Parish, Lexington/Port Sanilac and St. Christopher Parish, Caro/Mayville. The Caro Knights of Columbus headed up organizing and cooking the lunch and the effort was financially supported by several other Knights of Columbus councils from around the Thumb. This team effort is part of what the Rural Life Mass is all about.

“The vision of the Rural Life Masses... is that they be a grassroots event, uniting Catholics living in relative proximity to each other in rural communities, to foster ‘thriving families, farms, and parishes -- centered on faith, community, and care for the environment,’” said Father Stephen, quoting the Catholic Rural Life vision statement. †



Bishop Robert Gruss sprinkles seed with holy water and blesses them.



Bishop Robert Gruss greets those who attended the Rural Life Mass near Gagetown.

**To learn more about Catholic Rural Life, visit [www.catholicrurallife.org](http://www.catholicrurallife.org) or contact Lori Becker, Coordinator of Diocesan Outreach at 989.797.6652 or [lbecker@dioceseofsaginaw.org](mailto:lbecker@dioceseofsaginaw.org)**



## Ecumenical efforts seek to decrease gun violence

Local clergy are joining their voices with other local Christian leaders, representatives from law enforcement, politicians and concerned citizens to call for action, prayer and unity in the face of violence.

Deacon Larry Gayton, who serves as director of multicultural ministry for the Diocese of Saginaw, joined members of the Black and Hispanic communities in response to violence, particularly gun violence, both nationally and locally.

"This is very important work," Deacon Larry said. "While we are called to know God and to love God, we are also called to serve God. Faith must be followed by action."

The summer shooting incidents have weighed heavily on Deacon Larry's mind, as he visited two Saginaw residents who suffered life-threatening gunshot wounds. In response to requests from the family of shooting victims, Deacon Larry visited and prayed with the victims



and their spouses at a hospital in Saginaw.

"We are called to minister and pray with those suffering as they gather at the hospital. Seeing them suffering from needless violence, it's so horrible that it just tears you up. These all are our fellow brothers and sisters."

On June 16, Deacon Larry joined Christian leaders, including those from the Saginaw African American Pastors group and Latino clergy and civic leaders, as well as Father Frank Voris, OFM Cap., pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Saginaw, and Father Bill Rutkowski, vicar general and representative of Bishop Robert Gruss, to outline an action plan uniting Black and Latino

communities to work together to end gun violence, led by an ecumenical partnership.

"We hope to partner with these Saginaw Christian clergy in this and other community priorities for the common good of us all. It is a beginning, and more of 'journeying together' with these faith leaders is planned," Deacon Larry said.

Father Bill said he was impressed with the unity and resolve of local Christian leaders and also believes that members of the Catholic community should be aware that violence can happen in any place and that Catholics and all people should discourage the use of violence in resolving problems.

In the end, all those who gathered at the event in Saginaw agreed that the local community should work together to prevent and discourage violence and to offer ways to help. The newly-formed coalition is establishing goals to prevent gun violence and work towards unity between all communities.

## For Such a Time as This: 2022 Michigan Catholic Women's Conference

Mark your calendars! This year's Michigan Catholic Women's Conference will be held on Saturday, Oct. 15 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Lansing. The theme for the 2022 conference is "For Such a Time as This" and our guiding Bible verse is Esther 4:14: Perhaps you have come to your royal dignity for just such a time as this.

Teresa Tomeo, Sherri Wohlfert and Father Patrick Gonyeau will speak on this theme during the conference, and the day will be filled with music and activities to build your spirit through the love of Jesus and the energy of the Holy Spirit. To learn more about the conference or to register, visit [www.MichiganCWC.org](http://www.MichiganCWC.org). †







**MICHELLE DIFRANCO**

is a designer and the busy mom of three children.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHANE FOLKERTSMA

## Orange Creamsicle Pie

- 1 3-ounce package orange flavored gelatin dessert
- 1 cup hot water
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese (softened)
- 1 tablespoon orange zest
- 1/3 cup confectioner's sugar
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 store-bought graham cracker crust
- Whipped cream and orange wedges (for topping)

Dissolve gelatin powder in hot water. Set aside to cool. In a mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese until smooth. Add the orange zest, sugar, lemon and orange juices and beat until combined. Add the cooled gelatin mixture and beat until just combined and smooth in texture. Place in fridge and chill until almost set (about 35-45 minutes).

In a separate mixing bowl, beat the whipping cream for 2-3 minutes until it thickens. Add to the chilled gelatin mixture and beat until combined and smooth in texture. Pour into the graham cracker pie crust and spread evenly. Refrigerate until fully set (at least 6 hours or overnight). Serve with whipped cream and orange wedges on top.

## ST. DOMINIC'S ORANGE TREE

SOWED THE SEEDS OF FAITH

*"We must sow the seed, not hoard it."* – ST. DOMINIC

An old orange tree stands enclosed in a courtyard at Santa Sabina on the Aventine Hill in Rome. While there are a few versions of the legend surrounding this tree, one is that St. Dominic planted the seed from which it grew and that every time the orange tree produces a new shoot with much fruit, there would be a corresponding abundance and growth in the Dominican Order.

Whether that is pure legend, or some kind of ongoing worldly miracle, I don't know. But what can be said is that the Dominican order and its many beautiful shoots continue to bless the world with the same charisms of its founder – bearing fruit still today! That by itself is a miracle that blesses us all.

Dominic was born in Caleruega, Spain, in 1170. He was ordained to the priesthood at the age of 24. While traveling

throughout Europe as a young man, Dominic witnessed firsthand the heresies that were threatening the Church. Dominic would go on to establish the Order of Preachers, or the Dominicans, to combat heresy and to form an order based on the monastic life and religious poverty. The order today includes friars, nuns, sisters and laity.

St. Dominic worked to spread truth intelligently. His order read and distributed books to educate people with a proper understanding of the Gospels, while simultaneously living the example of sacrifice and humility. In a world beset by heresy, Dominic used books to teach the ignorant. In a world plagued by famine, Dominic in turn sold his books to feed the hungry. The Dominican Order's model was to connect a life of contemplative prayer and study with an active preaching for the salvation of souls. We honor St. Dominic on Aug. 8.

While it may be tough to plant an orange tree in his honor, might I suggest the following sweet treat instead! And may it remind us to sow the seeds of faith and help educate others with the truth of the Gospel the way St. Dominic did. †



# Joshua Robert Jasman:

## A joyful life of caring and sharing

BY MARY BETH LOOBY

Joshua Robert Jasman was truly one in a million. According to his mother, Michelle Jasman, Josh was born caring about others. When he was very little and still in a car seat, he would ask her to stop along the road to help someone who looked needy—even if that someone was on the other side of the highway! This was just the beginning of a life lived for God and for others.



Josh was smart and loved reading, and when he received treat coupons for reading in fourth grade, he didn't cash in his coupons right away. Instead, he saved them up until he had enough for the whole class. Then he bought all his St. James classmates a treat.

As a teen, Josh was visiting cousins in California before his illness. They had all just ordered pizza, but then Josh noticed a homeless man looking through the trash for food. He immediately got up and gave his pizza to that man.

Shortly after, Josh was diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma, a rare cancer that usually affects people between ages 10 and 20. Michelle said that even in the final stages of his disease, when Josh's father Thomas had taken time off to help his son, Josh encouraged him to go hunting, a sport they both enjoyed.

With his family at his side, Josh fought a valiant five-year battle with Ewing's sarcoma. He passed away on Oct. 20, 2009, just six days after his 20th birthday.

Josh attended St. James Grade School, where his mother said he received a wonderful education. He continued his education at All Saints Central High School

and was a graduate of Bay City Central. He enjoyed playing and watching hockey, football, basketball, hunting, fishing and playing cards.

In Josh's memory, the Josh Jasman Scholarship Fund was established in 2010 with the Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan (CCFMM). This advised fund was created in loving memory of Josh, who lived his life with the same fearless passion he lived his faith. Those who were touched by him during his life will be forever blessed. This fund creates additional opportunities for others to be blessed by Josh. The fund and the scholarships it provides have steadily grown—as of June 30, \$73,750 in scholarships have been awarded.

Each year a golf outing for the fund is held at the Bay County Golf Course and the recipients of the scholarship are announced. This year's event was June 25, and the recipients were Coltin Richardson, Desiree Killey, Grace Carley and Iris Grace Costilla.

"There was a great turnout for the Josh Jasman Golf Outing, and we don't even advertise. We had a lot of volunteers and really appreciate their help and that of

family and friends as well," Michelle said.

For more information about the scholarship, please visit [www.ccfmm.org/collegescholarships](http://www.ccfmm.org/collegescholarships) or contact the CCFMM at 989.303.9202. †

**Mission:** We encourage faithful giving that is responsibly managed and reflective of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

**Vision:** Joyous giving in Jesus, forever meeting the needs of God's people.

**The CCFMM is here to help guide you with your planned and legacy giving.**



The Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan is a registered 501(c)(3), and all gifts are tax-deductible.

For more information, call the CCFMM's executive director Kristin Smith at 989.599.0079 or [kristin.smith@ccfmm.org](mailto:kristin.smith@ccfmm.org)

BY DR. DAN OSBORN

# A REASONABLE *act of faith*

## QUESTION:

*Is it against reason to believe the Eucharist is truly “Jesus in disguise”?*

## ANSWER:

**This doctrine is not against reason, it is above reason; it’s a truth that had to be divinely revealed.**

In 1996, Susan Sarandon won an Oscar for her role in *Dead Man Walking*, in which she portrays Sister Helen Prejean, a religious sister who for decades has ministered to death row inmates. Sarandon was raised Catholic but left her faith while attending the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. I was struck by what she once shared in an interview – that being Catholic was a great preparation for her to become an actor. Why? In her view, Catholics have to “suspend their disbelief” in order to accept that bread and wine actually become the Body and Blood of Christ during Mass.

As the Catholic Church in the U.S. begins its three-year Eucharistic Revival, Sarandon’s perspective should be taken seriously. It’s not that she failed to understand what the Church teaches about the bread and wine being transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ at every Mass – it’s that she thought she had to push reason aside to accept this teaching. Essentially, she felt that it was unreasonable to accept as true something her senses told her was not true. Sarandon is probably not alone in having this viewpoint, and it is important for the Church to extend empathy and accompaniment to individuals who have this struggle.

Don’t we all see a mere piece of bread when we receive the consecrated Host in Holy Communion? Don’t we smell the scent of wine and taste its flavor when we receive Communion from the chalice? Isn’t it reasonable to accept what our senses are telling us? And doesn’t St. Thomas Aquinas himself affirm that, in general, we should trust our senses? The answer to all these questions is, yes! However,

there are exceptional cases when what we see, taste, feel, smell or hear fails to match reality.

For instance, you are relaxing on your porch and suddenly hear a loud jet flying by. You look up and the jet is not where your ears told you it would be, so you have to shift your line of vision to where the jet is in reality. Science, of course, has an explanation for this phenomenon based on the speed of light. This is just one of many examples of how our senses are not infallible. But God is infallible, and ultimately it is on his authority that we believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist – even though our senses perceive only bread and wine.

With regard to the Real Presence, therefore, we are called to confidently make a reasonable act of faith that the Eucharist “is truly the Lord,” based on the authority of God’s word in Scripture and the authority of the Church Christ founded. Jesus – the second person of the Holy Trinity – teaches in his Bread of Life sermon, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink” (Jn 54-55).

After all, which is more trustworthy in the end: our senses or God who created our senses? †

Vatican II declared that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life” in *Lumen Gentium* (11).

As dioceses across the U.S. embark on a three-year Eucharistic Revival, each issue of *FAITH Saginaw* will explore the Church’s doctrine on the Eucharist: faith that the bread and wine actually become the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ at every Mass.

**“Faith will tell us Christ is *present* when our human senses fail.”**

–ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *TANTUM ERGO*





**faith** *Saginaw*

5800 Weiss St.  
Saginaw, MI 48603-2762

[www.saginaw.org](http://www.saginaw.org)



Vladimir Vladimirov / iStock / Getty Images Plus

*SAVE THE DATE!*

## **Celebrating Catholic Schools**

**Back to School Mass  
with Bishop Gruss**

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

**Sunday, Oct. 9 at 5 p.m.**

***Reception to follow***

Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption  
615 Hoyt Ave., Saginaw, MI

- \* Catholic school students are encouraged to wear school jerseys or spirit wear shirts with pants or uniform skirts.
- \* Alumni and supporters of Catholic school education are also encouraged to attend and wear your Catholic school colors.