

THE MAGAZINE

OF THE CATHOLIC

DIOCESE OF

SAGINAW

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faith *Saginaw*

IN THE KNOW WITH FATHER JOE

How do I forgive God?

SPECIAL REPORT

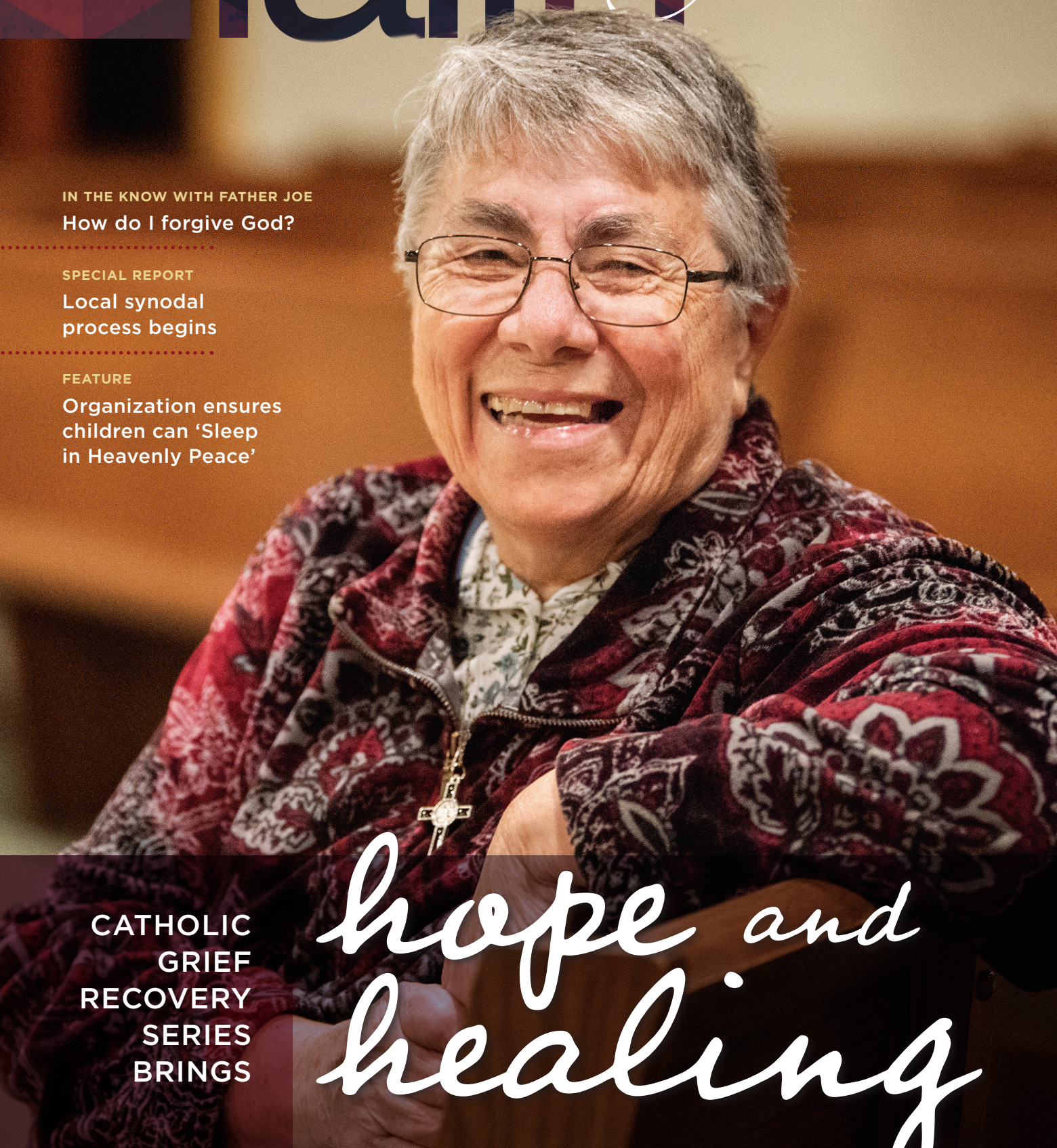
Local synodal
process begins

FEATURE

Organization ensures
children can 'Sleep
in Heavenly Peace'

CATHOLIC
GRIEF
RECOVERY
SERIES
BRINGS

*hope and
healing*



Do you hear what I hear?

“Take care, then, how you hear.” Luke 8:18

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Are you a good listener? Do you know a good listener?

My dad is one of the best listeners I know. He's a great conversationalist, who loves to talk and laugh, but I believe his real gift is listening. He asks questions, hearing what has been shared. He offers advice and solutions, but is not judgmental. He doesn't get distracted thinking about what he is going to say next. When differences are discussed, he finds a way to dialogue that remains open and positive.

I once read that, when it comes to listening, most of us overestimate how good we are at it. If we're being honest with ourselves, we could all benefit from becoming a better listener.

Earlier this year, Pope Francis announced the theme for the 2022 World Day of Communications. It is a single word: “Listen!” A release from the Holy See Press Office shared the following:

The pandemic has affected and wounded everyone, and everyone needs to be heard and comforted. Listening is also fundamental for good information. The search for truth begins with listening ... Every dialogue, every relationship begins with listening ...

... To be able to truly listen requires courage, and a free and open heart, without prejudice.

At this time when the whole Church is invited to listen in order to learn to be a synodal Church, we are all invited to rediscover listening as essential for good communication.

(See page 12 to learn about how you can get involved in the global synodal process locally).

May we have courage to open our ears and our hearts to truly listen to one another. And, as we grow in our ability to listen, may we more clearly hear the voice of God who speaks to each of us every day.

May the peace and joy of Christmas be with you and yours and many blessings to all of you in the New Year! †

Erin



**ERIN LOOBY
CARLSON**

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Diocese of
Saginaw.

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Merry Christmas

Students from Nouvel Catholic Central High School in Saginaw presented a living nativity during Saginaw's Holidays in the Heart of the City, while a recording of the Nativity story from the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, narrated by Father Kevin Wojciechowski, parochial vicar at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Saginaw, played in the background.

COVER STORY



Grow closer to Christ with these New Year's resolutions

Merry Christmas to all of you! By the time this issue of *FAITH Saginaw* magazine reaches your mailbox, Christmas will be near. For many people, the celebration of Christmas will last a very short time. But the Christmas season really begins on Dec. 25. In this season, the Lord is inviting you and me into a mystery of grace, whereby we are renewed by the Father's love. The Lord feels responsible for us and couldn't stand the thought of leaving us alone. His deepest Love came in human form so that we might experience true love.



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

These past 20-plus months have been—and continue to be—challenging for the whole world. But this global health crisis and its effects should not take away the joy and hope that come from the real meaning of Christmas—the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The true meaning of Christmas embodies times like these. The miracle of Christmas brings life into clear focus. This is why we celebrate Christmas each year. God chose to enter into our human suffering, whatever that suffering might be, by becoming one of us. Jesus came into the world to enter into our brokenness and the world's brokenness, so that he can bring his light into the darkness, healing into the world's pain, and mercy into our misery. The hope of new life in our pandemic world and all that encompasses it are embodied in the Christmas story. Christmas is not just an historical event, but a living reality, a timeless story without end, a story to be encountered each day.

The One who has saved us desires to encounter each of us, right where we are, in the midst of our current lives. Perhaps the great lesson of the Incarnation is precisely that God wants to meet us—and befriend us—right where we are.

How do we continue to live the Christmas story after all the decorations have come down, the trees have been put away and our focus shifts to just “getting through winter”? The beginning of each year has many of us thinking about New Year's resolutions with great resolve and determination in setting a new course for ourselves. New Year's resolutions should in some way impact our lives in a positive way and bring us blessings; otherwise we wouldn't resolve to do them in the first place.

But a month or two down the road, our resolutions can become a source of disappointment if they are unattainable or we experience failure in carrying them out, and they become just another list of things we had hoped to do.

Allow me to suggest my 10 Best New Year's Resolutions that I guarantee will bring God's abundant blessings upon us as individuals, upon your families, your parish community and our diocese. When practiced with desire, determination and discipline, lives will be changed and enriched in ways you cannot yet imagine. Guaranteed! Note that this list is not in the order of importance. They are all important!



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1. Dedicate at least 30 minutes of quiet time alone with God every day. A deeper relationship and intimacy with God comes about through personal prayer. Eucharistic adoration is a great opportunity for prayer.

2. Go to Mass. If you have not returned to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, resolve to make that a part of your week as a form of thanksgiving for all the Lord has done for you. Read *Bread That Is Broken* by Father Wilfrid Stinissen to come to a deeper understanding of the Mass.

3. Spend time daily with the sacred Scriptures. The Holy Bible is the inspired Word of God. Open your heart to the greatest love story ever told, and fall in love with God again! There are many Bible reading plans available, or you can listen to The Bible in a Year podcast with Father Mike Schmitz. You can find it online at www.ascensionpress.com or on any podcast app.

4. Pray as a family. “A family that prays together stays together.” Make time each day to have family prayer, in addition to prayer at meals and before bedtime. Pray the Rosary together or read the daily Scriptures together and talk about them.

5. Go to confession. By the nature of our baptism, we are called to holiness. It can't happen without God's mercy and forgiveness. If we are serious about our spiritual life, the Sacrament of Penance will be an important element.

6. Bring your children to Mass. Many children are brought to religious education classes but are not brought to Mass. At Mass, they can experience the Lord's love through the eucharistic celebration each week.

Christmas is not just an historical event, but a living reality, a timeless story without end, a story to be encountered each day.

7. Make time for spiritual reading. It will deepen your faith and bring growth to your spiritual life. *Time for God* by Father Jacques Philippe is one suggestion.

8. Invite others to come to Mass with you. We all know other Catholics who do not attend Mass on Sunday. Reach out to them by sharing your faith.

9. Join a Bible study or prayer group. Faith is deepened when shared. If there isn't a group available, start one of your own with your friends.

10. Pray daily for your bishop. HE NEEDS IT!

If any of these resolutions are embraced and put into practice, the year 2022 will be richly blessed for you, your family, your parish and our diocese—guaranteed. I believe that all of us can find ways to grow in our faith and love of God and teach our children what it means to be a Catholic in a committed relationship with the Lord.

God's deepest blessings await us! Best wishes on your New Year's resolutions, and may you experience the fullness of the riches that God desires to give you this Christmas and in the New Year. †

“DEAR FATHER JOE -

**My husband died
this year, and I am
so angry with God.**

How do I move past
that/forgive God for
taking the love of my
life away?”



Oh my lady — I’m so sorry. I can’t imagine the grief. I’ve lost family and I’ve lost friends, but to lose a spouse is a pain I can’t fathom. Please know that I am going to pause when I finish this article and pray for you and all who have lost a spouse to death.

I want to be as clear as I can on this point: My goal in writing this is not to make your pain go away. You will never hear me say “Don’t cry!” To deprive you of the pain of this moment would be a disservice to your husband, whom you loved so dearly. There is no silver bullet here, nothing to make the pain and sorrow go away. There is only an insertion of Christ into our pain that can inform it and strengthen our hope when human reasoning could never do so.

And hope really is the key. By hope, I don’t mean optimism. I mean the virtue of hope, which has a fancy definition that I will share with you, followed by one that is (I hope!) a bit easier to understand:

“[Hope is] the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.” (CCC #1817)

The key idea here is that hope is a gift God gives us that we can strengthen by calling on the Holy Spirit. The gift is a trust that, if we let him, Jesus will do what he promised: Get us to heaven where all wounds will be healed.

Your pain right now is a testament to your love. You loved your husband and were loved by him. This was a gift that challenged and sustained you your entire

married life. If you’ll excuse the wording here, did that experience of marriage *feel* temporary? Did it feel like something that will come and go?

I doubt it. I think to you, within that flawed but lovely experience of human love strengthened by divine strength, you sensed the eternal.

Your sense was and is correct. Love is God, God is love and covenants are forever. You who stood with your husband in a sacred place and pledged this covenant experienced something remarkable: God entered your human love and added his divinity to it.

Hope, in this moment, is the voice of God in your heart that tells you this is not over. This is an interruption, not a termination. Through calling on the Holy Spirit and trusting in the words and actions of Jesus, you can believe and know that you will see your husband again when “the love of Christ, which conquers all things, destroys death itself.” (Catholic funeral ritual)

So, what do you do with your anger?

First, I think you should make sure and express it to God. It’s not like God does not know it, so there is no sense in hiding it or even being ashamed. God sees your anger and longs to heal it, but he cannot do so until you give it to him. So give him your anger. Pour it out to him. Invite him into it.

Think of the Mass. Every day, we bring before God bread and wine. We present them to him and pray. As we pray, he transforms that bread and wine into his very self, and that would be enough for us to praise him forever. But God goes beyond that: After he transforms them into his self, he gives them back to us, so that we can be transformed.

This mystery of love is right at the heart of Catholicism and it, too, can serve to strengthen our hope. If God can do this to bread and wine, what can he do to my pain which comes from love?



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FAITH'S FIRM *foundation*

What you are experiencing now is awful. It is painful and I'm so sorry you are enduring it. At the same time, I want to be clear that this is how saints are made. There is no way to grow in faith, hope and love without pain.

To deal with the pain, I invite you to not only give that pain to the Lord, but to ask for the grace to reach out and find ways to serve.

When we hurt, our natural inclination is to turn inward. I've often thought that this is reflective of our broken human condition because ultimately, it is destructive. For us who hurt, for us who mourn, we will find great solace and strength in reaching out to others in different kinds of pain in order to help them. I'm not at all a fan of dealing with our pain with statements that minimize it: "Oh, other people have it so much worse." That is not helpful. Your pain is real and it is intense. We don't reach out to others in their pain to minimize ours, but to help us deal with our pain in a way that helps us.

The human person was not created for itself; it was created for God and others. When we meet the dark reality of our mourning by reaching out to God and others, we will find the slow, gentle process of healing begins. We will see that our pain and anger are not impediments to holiness, but invitations to it.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us, "Blessed are they who mourn, they will be comforted." Ultimately, this is our hope. You are mourning, but you will be comforted. Your human love was infused with divine love and it is eternal; the pain that this love is causing you now is temporary.

I pray that Jesus strengthen and bless you during this time. You, and all who mourn, are in my prayers.

Enjoy another day in God's presence. †

During the past several months, we have all heard outspoken voices with ceaseless opinions about masks and vaccinations, opening and closing of schools and workplaces.

As a woman religious, I am frequently the recipient of individuals' opinions about the Catholic Church. Some harken to days in an idealistic sense when everything seemed better. Others want certain practices of the Church to change as a precondition for their own active participation as Catholics.

Change is often necessary and beneficial. However, there is a bedrock foundation to the Catholic faith.

*The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas... truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.*¹

Three factors must be in unity: Scripture, Tradition, and the teachings of the Holy Father.² These three factors must be in coherence before a teaching is declared a matter of faith and morals.

For example, in 1950, Pope Pius XII declared the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary as dogma. The Blessed Mother was assumed, body and soul, into heaven. Pope Pius XII's declaration is consistent with a long tradition of belief within the Church. Moreover, there is nothing contrary in Scripture. The historical writings of the Popes have supported this definitive teaching. There

is cohesiveness among the three factors.

The dogma leaves open the question whether Mary died [as did her Son, Jesus Christ] or slept, referring to Eastern belief in the dormition [Latin: to sleep].

Another dogma is the pronouncement by Pope John Paul II that ordained priesthood is solely for men.³ Pope John Paul II described the ordination of men as a matter he could not change. That is, priestly ordination of women would be inconsistent with Tradition, Scripture and teachings of popes.

We can judge dogmatic teachings humanly in a variety of ways (out of step and discriminatory or, alternatively, welcome and clarifying), but the Church has never historically moved away from the three interlinked anchors. If dogma were rescindable, there would be an erosion of the stability of Faith.

While dialogue may occur about why or under what circumstance change should occur and about the unsettled questions surrounding dogma, dialogue will not change the Church's essence.

It is beneficial to think of the essence of our Faith. May we be consoled by that which will not change. May we be strengthened by God's presence among us, especially in the Mass, the reception of the Eucharist and Divine Revelation in Scripture. †

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church #88.

² Code of Canon Law, Canon 750, §1. Those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the word of God as it has been written or handed down by tradition, that is, in the single deposit of faith entrusted to the Church, and which are at the same time proposed as divinely revealed either by the solemn Magisterium of the Church, or by its ordinary and universal Magisterium, which in fact is manifested by the common adherence of Christ's faithful under the guidance of the sacred Magisterium. All are therefore bound to avoid any contrary doctrines.

³ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, May 22, 1994.



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ENCOURAGING HEALTHY EATING WITH OLDER KIDS

Here are a few helpful ideas for peaceful mealtimes, especially for older eaters.

► **It's not about the carrots!** Often it isn't about the food at all. It's an attempt to have control of something. Struggles with eating are often about emotions that have nothing to do with what's on the plate. Patiently get to the bottom of things and separate the applesauce from the tiredness, frustration or whatever else might be going on in your child's life.

FOOD IS FUEL, NOT A REWARD!

It's all about balance. Help your children focus on eating a variety of healthy foods to fuel their body and help them grow strong and stay healthy. Vegetables aren't the enemy that must be conquered before the sugary surprise at the end. This can send a message that the food on their plate is somehow not as valuable or important as the dessert.

► **Don't set up camps!** Not only are we trying to build up healthy bodies, we are aiming for healthy body image as well. If we label foods as good foods and bad foods, kids can lose their sense of balance. An occasional piece of chocolate cake isn't the enemy, but we need to teach our kids that different foods can do different things for our body. Comments such as, "Eating that will make you fat" or "People who care about their health never eat those things" can be tough for a kid to understand and can lead to feelings of shame.

► **Change is OK!** What happens if your pre-teen comes home and wants to become a vegetarian? The first step if you are a cheese-burger-loving household is to take a breath. There are a few things to remember. Have a conversation about the root of the change. Is there a sincere desire to change or is it precipitated by peers? Do some homework. Study together what nutrients a person needs during their teen years and figure out how this new style of eating will meet these needs. Take it for a test drive. Find some recipes that look interesting and prepare them together. At the end of the test drive, evaluate and see where you stand. One thing to be clear about is the need for teamwork with food prep; help them understand you still have to feed the rest of the family so two separate dinner menus can't happen without help.

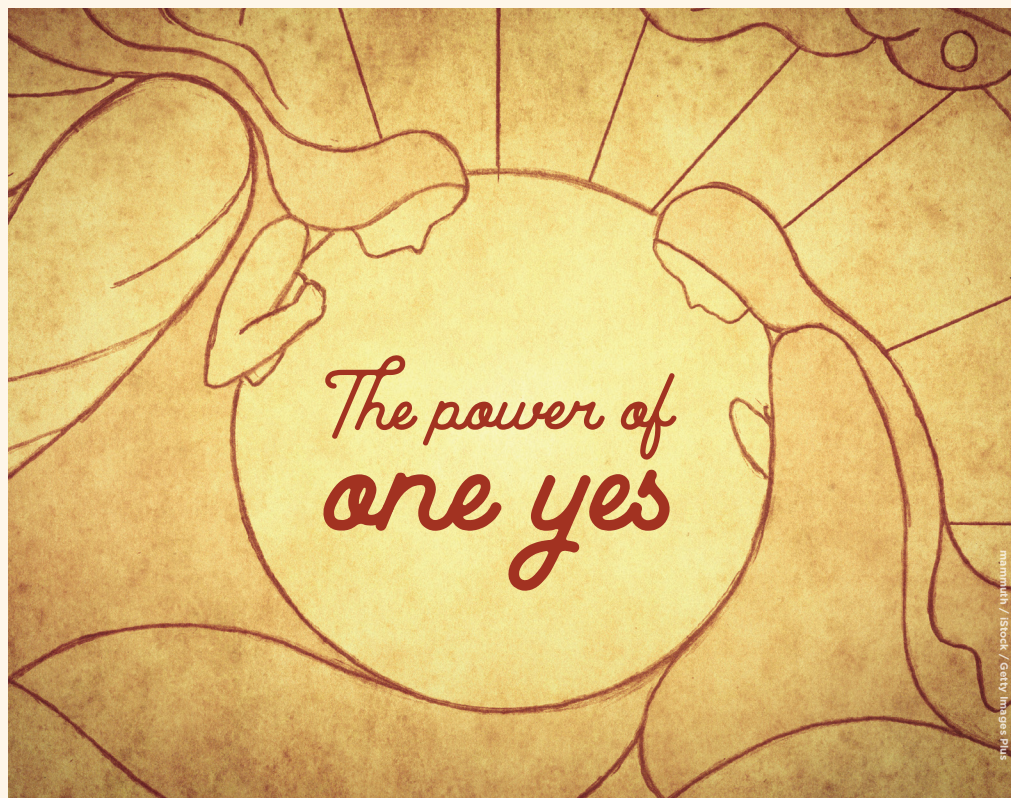
► **GRACE!** Ask God for the grace to give your worries over to him — to remember they may make less than stellar food choices when they aren't in your kitchen. It's not just about one meal or one weekend, it's about making mostly good choices much of the time.

► **Prayer!** When we pray together before meals, we are trusting that the God who created and adores us will nourish, sustain and bless us and our bodies. ✝



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When the cross comes your way, say “thy will be done.” A vocation to the priesthood or religious life is a life of joyful sacrifice. For many it does not come easily, as it can lead to a complete 180 in one’s life plans. If openness to the will of God is part of one’s culture, it makes it easier to go through such a discernment.

Third, encourage without pressuring. It is a fine thing to encourage a young man to discern the priesthood. You could say, “I see qualities in you that I admire in priests. I think you should pray about it.” Do so without ever pressuring. Be willing to encourage and plant seeds. Studies suggest that many recently-ordained priests began discerning a vocation to the priesthood because someone

invited them to discern it, yet studies also show very few people actually make such an invitation.

Fourth, be close to priests. Have kids serve at the altar. Invite a priest to your home to share a meal. Priests need to be seen reverently offering the Mass, joyfully preaching the Gospel and generously serving the sick, but it is also good that they be seen eating ice cream, playing a sport or having a good laugh.

For men discerning a priestly call, I think it is helpful to move away from the abstract to the concrete. Who will give the sacraments to my family in future generations? Who will baptize my future nieces and nephews? Who will lovingly embrace my friends coming to be made new by the Father’s rich mercy in the sacrament of Reconciliation? Who will anoint my aunts and uncles as they approach death and prepare for the final step in the journey to the promised land? Who will offer the Mass? Who will give the Eucharist to the hungry people of God? Who will teach the faith and be like the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep?

Who will say “yes” when called?

Only God knows the power of every “yes” offered to him in faith and love. May the Lord bless the Church with many vocations to the priesthood and religious life! †

As we experience the joy of the Christmas season, aren’t we moved by the power of the “yes” given to the Father’s will?



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Mary says “yes” at the Annunciation to bear Our Lord into the world. Joseph says “yes” to take Mary into his house and to be the foster father of Jesus. Jesus’ whole life is one “yes” to the Father’s will in accomplishing our redemption. They each say “yes” to their vocation, to the call God has for them in their lives. Speaking personally, the death of St. John Paul II served as a catalyst for my own discernment of a priestly vocation as I found myself praying about the power of his “yes” in leading people to Jesus.

Priestly and religious vocations grant the Church a vibrant vitality. How might families encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life?

First, spouses: cherish one another. St. Paul exhorts the husband to love his wife as Christ loves the Church. When children see their parents love each other, despite their weaknesses and differences and idiosyncrasies, they are formed to understand that a vocation is not a career or life choice, but a call to love.

Second, be open to God’s will. When making important decisions, pray for God to guide you.

**FROM THE ERA OF
ASTRONAUTS AND VATICAN II:**

APPRECIATION FOR OUR PIONEER DEACONS

The Right Stuff tells the enthralling story of our nation's first space explorers and the many challenges they faced. We can only imagine, for instance, what John Glenn must have felt on Feb. 20, 1962, when he became the first American to orbit the Earth in his space capsule, Friendship 7. He and others like Alan Shepherd and Neil Armstrong were truly the pioneers of what came to be called "the space age."

It's an interesting historical coincidence that in the same year Glenn first circled the entire globe, Catholic bishops from around the world gathered in Rome for the first ecumenical council in 92 years – the Second Vatican Council, which was convoked by Pope St. John XXIII. At the Council's opening he explained that, while holding fast to the Faith handed down from the apostles, the Church "must ever look to the present, to the new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate." In the 1960s, the Holy Spirit was truly calling the Church to a new era of engagement and evangelization – and the permanent diaconate was a fascinating part of the story of the Council.

While NASA was introducing us to its own group of heroic pioneers, a decision made by the bishops at Vatican II led to another new group of "pioneers" in the life of the Church. Roughly 1,500 years after its disappearance, the pope and bishops determined that the permanent diaconate would be restored in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church. During that period, men were still ordained deacons – but their ordinations were only viewed as stepping stones to the priesthood (hence the term "transitional deacon"). Suddenly, as a result of Vatican II, married and

single men would once again be ordained as permanent deacons – called to be icons of Christ the Servant through their ministries of charity and evangelization and in the liturgy.

This decision to restore the diaconate as a permanent order did not come out of the blue. There had been discussions going on for some time among Church leaders and theologians about restoring the permanent diaconate, including in a highly unlikely place – the Nazi concentration camp, Dachau. It is estimated that 2,700 clergymen were imprisoned there, including 2,400 Catholic priests. "It was the largest religious community living together in the history of the Catholic Church," according to Dr. Dianne Traflet of Seton Hall University. Many were housed in Cell Block 26, which came to be known as the prieststerblock. There, priests and religious who had been arrested during Hitler's reign of terror began to ask each other, "How could a Christian country like Germany fall into such a tragic state?" One idea that emerged was the sense that having deacons intermingled in German society could have made a difference. Permanent deacons have one foot in the secular world and one foot in the Church as ordained ministers – so they can be a powerful force to help a Christian culture keep the Faith, especially when faced with threats like Nazism.



DR. DAN OSBORN

*Diocesan
Theologian and
Coordinator
of Permanent
Diaconate
Formation &
Ministry.*

In his all-powerful love, God can even bring good out of horrific evil – and the hopes for having a permanent diaconate that were expressed in one of Hitler's death camps formally came to life on June 18, 1967 when Pope St. Paul VI restored the diaconate as a permanent order in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church. The following year, he granted specific permission for the permanent diaconate to be restored in the United States.

One of the bishops who took part in Vatican II was Bishop Francis Reh, who served as a discussant on liturgical reform during the Council. (At that time, he was the Bishop of Charleston.) After being named the third Bishop of Saginaw in 1968, Bishop Reh formally initiated the Permanent Deacon Formation Program in the Diocese of Saginaw on Sept. 14, 1972. We are very blessed that seven of the men ordained to the permanent diaconate in the subsequent decade are still with us. Let's take a moment to honor and pray for these "pioneer deacons."

IS GOD CALLING YOU TO SERVE AS A PERMANENT DEACON?

The Diocese of Saginaw accepts applications every four years from married and single men (age 30 or older) who sense a call to the permanent diaconate. If you feel drawn to diaconal ministry, please contact the Office of the Permanent Diaconate by Jan. 31, since a key application deadline is soon approaching. Call 989.797.6662 or email diaconate@dioceseofsaginaw.org



From left to right: Deacon Mike Arnold, Deacon Larry Fussman, Bishop Robert Gruss, Deacon Dave Adler, Deacon Lee Stilwell, Deacon Frank Hudson. Not pictured: Deacon John Cremin and Deacon John Moeggenberg.



Deacon Mike Arnold (ordained March 9, 1975)

Spouse: Donna

Parish: Prince of Peace Parish, Linwood

Favorite Ministry: "Funeral ministry has meant a great deal to me as a deacon."



Deacon Lee Stilwell (ordained Oct. 24, 1975)

Spouse: Judy

Parish: Prince of Peace Parish, Linwood

Favorite Ministries: "Visiting the homebound, the elderly and those in the hospital have been ministries particularly dear to my heart."



Deacon Larry Fussman (ordained Oct. 1, 1976)

Spouse: Kathy

Parish: Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Mount Pleasant

Favorite Ministries: "Social justice has been a big focus in my ministry – corporal works of mercy such as visiting the sick. I have also loved being able to preside at the weddings of my three children, as well as baptizing four of my grandchildren."



Deacon John Moeggenberg (ordained March 12, 1978)

Spouse: +Marge (died Oct. 4, 2021)

Parish: Immaculate Conception Parish, Traverse City

Favorite Ministries: "All the ways I have served as a deacon have been just wonderful!"



Deacon Frank Hudson (ordained May 30, 1978)

Spouse: Evelyn

Parish: St. Brigid of Kildare Parish, Midland

Favorite Ministries: "As city treasurer in Midland, they started calling me 'the chaplain of City Hall.' I have especially enjoyed being a spiritual director and serving as the director of the Charismatic Renewal Center in Saginaw a number of years ago."



Deacon John Cremin (ordained May 29, 1979)

Spouse: Bea

Parish: Nativity of the Lord Parish, Alma

Favorite Ministries: "The ministries that I have found especially meaningful have been visiting the shut-ins and the sick, including hospital ministry."



Deacon Dave Adler (ordained Oct. 19, 1980)

Spouse: Betty

Parish: Corpus Christi Parish, Bay City

Favorite Ministry: "Hands down, the ministry that meant the most to me was hospice ministry, which I was involved in for 11 years."

These seven men, and deceased "pioneer deacons" such as Deacons Mike Jankowiak, George Keller and Dave Kasprzyk, deserve our deep appreciation, as do their wives and children who supported them. We can truly say that, around that same remarkable moment in history when Neil Armstrong made headlines for taking what he called "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," these Catholic men took a bold leap in faith to serve the Church as permanent deacons – humbly following the example of our Lord who "did not come to be served, but to serve." ✝

GLOBAL SYNODAL PROCESS BEGINS LOCALLY



Bishop Robert Gruss prays during the opening Mass of the "Synod on Synodality" at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw on Oct. 20.

In the time leading up to the Synod of Bishops in October 2023, Pope Francis has invited all Catholics from around the world to come together to reflect on their experiences and share input on how the Church can best fulfill her mission in these current times.

BY CHRIS PHAM

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JEFF
SCHRIER

To begin this journey together, Bishop Robert Gruss celebrated an opening Mass of the "Synod on Synodality" at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw on Oct. 20. The synod is now in its first phase, which will focus on listening and discernment at the diocesan, or local, level.

During his homily, Bishop Robert Gruss quoted Pope St. John Paul II's encyclical *Vita Consecrata*, in which the Holy Father wrote, "You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things."

What is the Synod of Bishops?

"The synod is an assembly of bishops from around the world who assist the Holy Father by providing counsel on important questions facing the Church in a manner that preserves the Church's teaching and strengthens her internal discipline" (USCCB). After the Second Vatican Council, Pope St. Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops to regularly bring together a group of bishops from all over the world, representing the universal Church. A Synod of Bishops usually lasts a few weeks and at its conclusion, a list of proposals ascends to the pope, which often results a papal teaching document called a "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation."

GET INVOLVED

Visit saginaw.org/synod2023 to learn about the latest developments related to the synod, including opportunities for you to serve and participate. You'll also find a timeline, answers to frequently asked questions, contact information and more. You can also contact your parish for information. Dates and times for listening sessions will be available in early 2022.

Bishop Gruss explained how the Holy Father's words could be applied locally.

"I'm looking forward to this great history that this Diocese is still to accomplish, to look at the future where the Spirit is sending us in order to do even greater things," he said.

Bishop Gruss went on to share how through convening the synod, Pope Francis is inviting the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for the life and mission of the Church. The theme of the synod is For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.

Bishop Gruss then explained how "the diverse members of our Diocese will be able to learn from one another's experiences and one another's perspectives, always realizing that it's all guided by the Holy Spirit. So enlightened by the word of God and united in prayer, then we are able— all of us are able— together, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to discern God's will and pursue the pathways to

which the Lord calls us— all of us, the whole Church— to deeper communion. This is what this is all about: a deeper communion, fuller participation and a greater openness to fulfilling our mission in the world as Church universal and as Church local."

Bishop Gruss also noted how the 2023 synod could be a "new Pentecost moment" for the Church.

"Perhaps that first Pentecost moment was a form of synodality," said Bishop Gruss. "Where they listened to each other in different voices, their experiences, and then they went forth and lived the mission of Jesus in the world where they were sent by the Holy Spirit."

Bishop Gruss appointed Joe Stong, director of the Office of Stewardship and Development, and Don Buchalski, Vicariate Liaison and Coordinator of Evangelization, to oversee the diocesan synodal process, which will last from now until August 15, 2022. This phase's purpose will be to foster a broad

consultation at the local level, surrounded by prayer. This process will involve priests, deacons, lay faithful, religious communities and many others.

"Especially, the Holy Father wants to hear from those on the periphery and on the margins, who are often excluded and forgotten," Bishop Gruss said. "That's why he's aiming at the widest participation possible. So, every one of us is encouraged to participate in this process."

Bishop Gruss quoted Pope Francis saying, "As the Church embarks on this synodal journey, we must strive to ground ourselves in experiences of authentic listening and discernment on the path of becoming the Church that God calls us to be."

Bishop Gruss closed his homily with a request from the faithful.

"Finally, keep this whole process in your daily prayers that the Holy Spirit truly does guide the hearts of all of us so that we can become who the Lord has called us to be," he said. †

Why have a "Synod on Synodality"?

SYNODALITY IS ABOUT JOURNEYING TOGETHER. That's the meaning of the Greek word behind the word synod. Pope Francis desires the Church to continue growing in the spirit of collegiality and communion that was present at the Second Vatican Council. He has therefore asked for a two-year process of coming together for discussions and to listen to everyone, particularly marginalized peoples. This process culminates in October 2023 with the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican, dedicated to the theme, "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission." The synod's goal is not to democratize the Church but to prayerfully discern how the Holy Spirit wants to guide us at this moment in time.

'THIS IS OUR calling.'

Local Sleep in Heavenly Peace chapter ensures no child sleeps on the floor



STORY AND
PHOTOGRAPHY
BY DANIELLE
MCGREW
TENBUSCH

The volunteers with Sleep in Heavenly Peace might add an eighth corporal work of mercy: provide beds to the bedless.

That's the mission of the national organization: "No kid sleeps on the floor in our town." Since July 2020, a Sleep in Heavenly Peace (SHP) chapter in Auburn has been working to make that dream a reality.

"We ... view this opportunity as a mission and we as (God's) missionaries," said Jeff Stevens, a member of St. Agnes Parish in Freeland. "We frequently refer to the Gospel where we are told to feed the hungry and clothe the poor, and (we) feel this is our calling."

A nonprofit based in Twin Falls, Idaho, Sleep in Heavenly Peace builds, assembles and delivers beds to children in need through their

more than 250 chapters nationwide. Jeff was asked to get involved locally after his friend Brian Rueger read about the organization in 2019, identified a local need and established a chapter.

Jeff agreed to be part of the leadership team and became the delivery manager. Through his involvement, Jeff discovered a heartbreaking reality: there are hundreds of children in our communities who don't have their own bed.

"It's overwhelming to see the need," Jeff said.

One build and one delivery at a time, Jeff and the SHP volunteers are changing that.

Giving beds and smiles

"The bed build is a very organized assembly line," Jeff said. "We've got a crew of build managers—they organize the build, organize the lumber purchase and organize the workflow. It's efficient enough that we're building 40 beds in three hours."

The lumber is purchased or donated from local businesses. Once, Jeff said, a Midland store manager was so moved by SHP's mission, the store donated two month's worth of materials.

Once a month, volunteers from the community gather to measure, cut, sand and treat the lumber to build the twin-sized bed frames, including the headboard, sideboards and slats to support the mattress. The wood is stained with a natural bug repellent made from vinegar and steel wool and branded with SHP's logo.

When someone requests a bed through the national website, Jeff helps arrange a delivery of the twin-size bed frame, mattress, mattress pad, pillow, sheets and comforter—all brand new. The delivery team assembles the beds onsite as either singles or bunk beds.

"I've seen sullen 15-year-old boys that walked into their room and saw a bed in there for the first time. Their huge, beaming smile was just incredible."

Since SHP Auburn's first deliveries in November 2020, they have delivered 338 beds and have 79 children in queue as of Dec. 2.

"When we go knocking on (a client's) door ... the kids are just excited, incredibly excited. And by the time we build the bed onsite in their bedrooms, we deliver a fully-made bed. The sheets are on, the comforter is on, everything is ready to go," Jeff said. "I've seen sullen 15-year-old boys that walked into their room and saw a bed in there for the first time. Their huge, beaming smile was just incredible."

The parents, too, are deeply grateful, and some express interest in getting involved with SHP.

"I can't stress enough what a blessing this is and the generosity and kindness this organization is showing our community," said Bonnie Jones of Sanford, who received two bunk beds after learning her four grandchildren would be moving in with her.

When four SHP volunteers arrived on Aug. 28 to assemble the beds, her grandchildren—ages 5, 7, 12 and 15—were away. The beds, Bonnie said, would be a surprise.

"They'll be really thankful," she said. "This is such a huge help. I

can't have these kids sleeping on air mattresses."

As volunteer Valerie Kuehne, a parishioner at Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish in Bay City, tucked a comforter around a bottom bunk, Bonnie noticed an exciting detail: the comforter featured characters from Frozen, the 5-year-old girl's favorite movie.

To bless and be blessed

SHP is one of several ways Jeff gives back through both his parish and community organizations.

"Jeff is great, as is his whole family," said Father Andy LaFramboise, pastor of St. Agnes Parish. "He has been super excited about this project and has told me a lot about it. It has exploded. I'm so grateful for his involvement in this initiative."

Father Andy pointed out that sheltering the homeless is a corporal work of mercy, and that Christ reminds us that "...as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me," (Matthew 25:40).

"As Catholics, we are called to care for the bodily and spiritual needs of others. Every bed that Jeff and the others make allows these kids to have a restful night. The

SUPPORT SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE'S MISSION:

Donations of new twin bedding, mattresses, mattress pads and pillows can be dropped off at Auburn and Sage (Bay City) Public Libraries, as well as the Lincoln and Euclid branches of United Bay Community Credit Union. New twin mattresses can also be purchased and donated at a discount from Dan Dan the Mattress Man.

Learn more at www.shpbeds.org

For volunteer opportunities, contact
Katie O'Connor at kvitamarie@gmail.com

care they give reflects God's desire that we find our rest in him, 'Come to me, you who labor and are burdened and I will give your rest,'" he said, citing Matthew 11:28.

Seeing the volunteerism and the gratitude from clients has also imprinted on Jeff's heart.

"It helps strengthen my faith and belief in the human good: there is goodness in all," he said.

As they depart, the SHP delivery team will generally offer a simple 'God bless you' — which clients often return.

"The faith in the community is still there," Jeff said. "If we can offer and extend blessings to our clients and our clients similarly extend blessings to us— to me, that's powerful. That says a lot." †

1. Sleep in Heavenly Peace builds and donates beds for children. A chapter based in Auburn has helped about 200 young people.

2. Dale Walls and Howard Kraenzlein Sr. assemble a bed frame at a Sanford home.

3. Valerie Kuehne, a parishioner at Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish in Bay City, makes a bed after it has been assembled. Each child who receives a bed from Sleep in Heavenly Peace also gets a mattress, pillow, sheets and comforter.

4. Jeff Stevens, a parishioner at St. Agnes in Freeland, volunteers as the delivery manager for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. The nonprofit organization makes and assembles beds for children with the motto "No kid sleeps on the floor in our town!"



1



2



3



4

CATHOLIC GRIEF RECOVERY SERIES BRINGS

hope and healing

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH

Rosemary Newcomb holds a “sick call crucifix,” which belonged to her grandmother. The crucifix slides open to access small candles and holy oil that a priest could use to administer Last Rites. Now, priests generally carry their own items to celebrate the Anointing of the Sick.



When Rosemary Newcomb’s husband, Ernie, died in 2016, she was devastated.

“We had only been married seven years, so it was like we were still on our honeymoon,” Rosemary said. She didn’t know what to do next.

“He died on a Friday, and I went to church on Sunday because I couldn’t stay away.”

The priest was in his usual spot at the door, greeting everyone. When he saw Rosemary walk in, he held out his arm and the fabric on the sleeve of his chasuble fell around her.

“I felt wrapped in God’s comforting embrace,” Rosemary said. “That comfort definitely was there when I needed it the most. There was a lot of weeping. But it was a blessed time.”

“If we didn’t have our Catholic faith, this wouldn’t make any sense at all. If we didn’t know that there was a life after death, that there is an eternal life—What sense would life make?”

- ROSEMARY NEWCOMB

Finding community

After such a loss, Rosemary didn’t know how to begin processing her grief.

“(Ernie) taught me so much about love and commitment, just by our being together, so I really had a lot to process,” she recalled.

God brought her that opportunity through her new job as the pastoral care coordinator at St. Peter Parish in Chesaning. Some parishioners, also grieving, mentioned that the parish hadn’t hosted a grief ministry in some time, and Rosemary realized it was something she needed, too. She contacted the Diocese of Saginaw and they joined a Catholic Grief Recovery Series, which helps individuals following the death of a loved one, facilitated by Mary Emmendorfer from St. Michael Parish of Maple Grove.

“It was very helpful to me personally. ... I really could identify with what was presented in terms of coping skills and understanding that you’ve got to work through this,” she said. “I thought that this is really something worthwhile.”

With the help of Lori Becker, Coordinator of Diocesan Outreach for the Diocese of Saginaw, and fellow parishioners, the grief ministry at St. Peter’s was reestablished. Rosemary gathered a team of six people, and Lori trained them as facilitators. Their team—Rosemary, Betty Sutliff, Penny Apsey, Sue Cramer, Pam Corey and Rob Kopchitz (who joined later)—has now hosted the grief recovery series a number of times. Though the series follows a guide prepared by the diocesan Office of Parish Life and Evangelization, they are sensitive to the particular circumstances of each person participating.



Penny Apsey, Betty Sutliff, Rosemary Newcomb and Rob Kopchitz are four of the six facilitators for the Catholic Grief Recovery Series at St. Peter Parish in Chesaning.

"Each time that we go through, we understand that the people in front of us are individuals and they're all going through grief in their own way," Rosemary said.

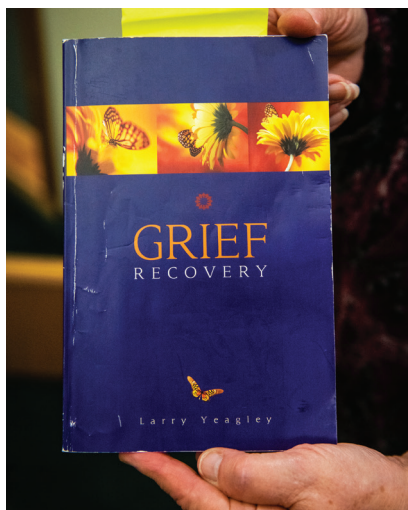
One of the crucial benefits of the series is to help others realize that they are not alone. In what Lori describes as the Holy Spirit working, the group members bond and often continue fellowship after the series has ended.

"It's within the church that we find our comfort," Lori said. "It's coming together to support each other in Jesus' name. The beauty is ... they take how they were comforted and they comfort someone else, and so it continues. It's not ending. We always take what Jesus taught us and help somebody else through their suffering."

Passing along the comfort they have been given is an experience Rosemary and the other facilitators are familiar with.

"It was amazing," said Penny Apsey of the first Catholic Grief Recovery Series she attended. "It helped me so much. It's like, I'm not the only one in the world going through this."

After her husband Tim had a massive stroke, Penny encouraged him to join a support group before his death. Now a



The Catholic Grief Recovery Series is based on *Grief Recovery* by Larry Yeagley.

grief recovery facilitator, she walks with others on their journey.

"It's not just for the people who are coming to the class ... but everybody that comes helps me in some way," she said.

Rob Kopchitz joined the Catholic Grief Recovery Series with his wife Paula after their daughter, Nichole, died of breast cancer.

"There is some measure of help to relieve the pain, because it's enormous," he said.

Rob found the series to be so valuable, he went through it a second time and became a facilitator as well.

"If I can give the smallest measure of help, of support, to anybody who wants to attend ... it makes me feel a sense of gratitude. This is a wonderful program," he said.

The facilitators all agree.

"It seems that we're there to try to help (participants), but in listening to the stories and observing their courage in dealing with their life and dealing with their loss, it's a support and bounces right back ... to us and impacts us just as much as we're trying to impact their life," Rosemary said.

Grief is work

A guiding truth behind the Catholic Grief Recovery Series is simply: grief is work, but no one has to do it alone.

"We teach what grief really is to help people to understand that what they're feeling is normal," Lori said. "It leads people from understanding what it really is and that they're not alone, then takes them through the coping skills-- how to survive holidays and special anniversaries-- what God says about grief, all the way through to the end, where ... they're realizing that they can have hope, and healing can begin."

Lori notes that the series cannot take away one's grief, but "it gives (participants) the confidence and support they need to begin moving forward."

Rooted in Scripture, the program guides participants through six weeks of material based on the book *Grief Recovery* by Larry Yeagley.

"As we come out of the shock of the loss, there's a place that we have to go, and it takes effort to get there," Rosemary said. "It's our work, but it's also the work of God, so we're very much in tune to how God is working in our hearts and in our souls."

THE CATHOLIC GRIEF RECOVERY SERIES is open to all and supported by Christ's Mission Appeal. Individual support offerings are available at many parishes throughout the Diocese, thanks to 51 trained facilitators. If anyone feels called to become a facilitator or needs help through the grief recovery process, please call Lori Becker at 989.797.6652.

One of the first goals is to help participants acknowledge the loss and suffering. The series also helps families prepare for holidays. Betty Sutliff, a facilitator, recalled the first Christmas after her husband Marion passed away was extremely challenging.

"It didn't go well at all. I thought we'd do everything as usual, which was a big mistake—a huge mistake ... I felt really bad that I hadn't been more considerate of others' feelings," she said.

The following Christmas, the family altered their celebration, and it went much better, Betty said.

"(The series) really helped me to know what other people were feeling. I think that was one of the main things, to realize that I was not going through this alone," Betty said, adding that she learned how people process grief differently.

Grief facilitators have also been providing additional resources for coping during the pandemic.

"It has only intensified the sadness and the grief and the pain," said Lori, noting that every group had reported this added difficulty. "They're not only facing their loss from the death of the person that they love, but they're also facing their other losses through COVID that is intensifying the grief of loneliness, of not being able to go to Mass, of being isolated. All of the things that should have been there to help them through the grief—they've lost that, too, and so we are really intentionally talking about that to help people understand how this has complicated their grief."

Keeping memories alive

The goal of the Catholic Grief Recovery Series is not to push aside one's emotions, whatever they may be.

"Our emotions are a gift from God," she



ABOVE: Rob Kopchitz, Rosemary Newcomb, Betty Sutliff and Penny Apsey are four of the six facilitators for the Catholic Grief Recovery Series at St. Peter Parish in Chesaning.

said. "You use them to move through life and to heal from suffering."

Rosemary noted those who come to the grief recovery series are facing many different issues: emotional, social, financial. Yet their faith, along with the skills they learn in the series, can help.

"Our life is cut in pieces... We have to put it all back together," she described. "I had to figure out what the relationship meant to me and how it will continue in the future—and in a different way. I don't have (Ernie's) physical presence anymore, but I have his memory, and that memory was so important to establish."

Rosemary also described the comfort her faith brought.

"If we didn't have our Catholic faith, this wouldn't make any sense at all. If we didn't know that there was a life after death, that there is an eternal life—What sense would life make?" she said "There's more to life than what we see right now in front of us."

She, like other series participants, believes God can bring good from all things. Ernie was not Catholic when they met, but he converted during their marriage.

BELOW: Penny Apsey, a parishioner at St. Peter Parish in Chesaning, laughs as she chats with fellow facilitators.



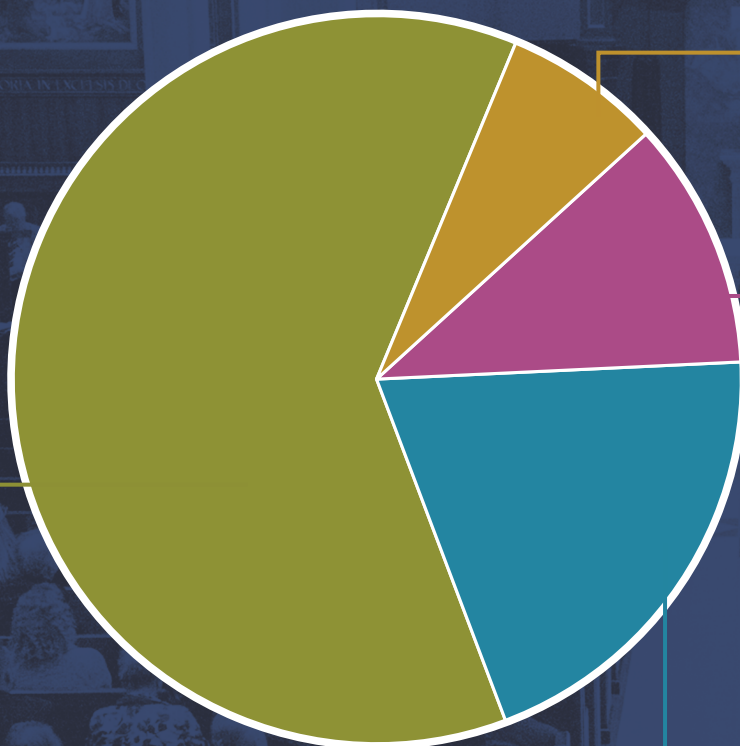
"Here's part of God's plan: God brought us together to bring him to church," Rosemary said. "I think (Ernie's) right there saying, 'We got this far together, but God's got more journey to take you (on).' And I'm sure he's up there supporting me, just like he always did when we were together." ✝

Christ's Mission Appeal

impact report

TOTAL DIOCESAN BUDGET:
\$6,020,494

Christ's Mission Appeal funds approximately half of the total budget.



PARISH SUPPORT: 62%

- Continuing education for priests
- Assistance and training for parish staff and volunteers in:
 - Finance and strategic planning
 - Christian service outreach
 - Parish buildings evaluations
- Coordination and staffing of all special Diocesan liturgies, such as the Chrism Mass, clergy funerals and ordinations
- Certification for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
- Assistance to parishes with construction or renovation projects
- Assistance to parishes in fundraising and communication for major projects
- Training of grief ministers
- Marriage preparation
- Hispanic and multicultural ministries
 - Special liturgies and cultural celebrations
 - Translations and special materials for liturgies and evangelization
 - Assistance to migrant laborer populations
- Safe environment training to protect the young and vulnerable

EDUCATION, FAITH FORMATION AND VOCATIONS: 20%

- Lay ministry formation
- Youth and young adult programs
- World Youth Day pilgrimage for students throughout the Diocese
- Training and development for parish youth ministry leaders
- Live and virtual large-scale youth events
- Education and formation for faith formation leaders in parishes
- Professional development for Catholic schools' staff members
- Accreditation for Catholic schools
- Campus ministry at Saginaw Valley State University, Central Michigan University and Alma College
- Vocation recruitment
- Seminarian support
- Permanent deacon formation

**Note: This list is only a sampling and does not include all ministries or supported programs of the Diocese of Saginaw.*

● **SUPPORT FOR THE BROADER CHURCH: 7%**

- Catholic Family Services – offering mental and emotional health services in Saginaw, Bay and Isabella counties
- Catholic University
- Catholic Relief Services
- Campaign for Human Development
- Mother Teresa Fund – providing financial assistance to individuals or couples experiencing limited financial resources while awaiting the birth of their child and/or during the initial period following birth.

● **SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS THROUGH COMMUNICATIONS: 11%**

- FAITH Saginaw magazine
- Live streaming Masses and other liturgies from the Cathedral
- Creation of videos for use on social media, diocesan and parish websites, etc.

THANK YOU *for your generous support of Christ's Mission Appeal!*

AS OF 2019, THE DIOCESE OF SAGINAW IS HOME TO:

56 parishes in 11 counties

12 Catholic schools

86,333 registered Catholics

2,084 Catholic schools students

3,367 parish faith formation students

WE CELEBRATED

707 Baptisms

214 Marriages

1,498 First Communion and Confirmations

The legacy of our bi-ritual priest

Father John Ederer's ministry spread love of the Holy Spirit

For more than four decades, Father John Ederer lived his priestly vocation, spreading the news that the Holy Spirit is alive and sent by Christ to advocate for his people. The word "Spirit" comes from the Latin word *spirare* meaning "to breathe." Father John was not only a great promoter of devotion to the Holy Spirit, he was also bi-ritual, meaning he celebrated both the Latin Rite Mass and the Divine Liturgy of the Byzantine Rite. In this sense, he personally lived out the call of Pope St. John Paul II, who greatly desired the Church to "breathe with both lungs" – that is, to draw upon the spiritual and liturgical heritages of both the Christian west and the Christian east.

BY DENYSE SHANNON

PHOTOS COURTESY
OF THE EDERER FAMILY

Father John Ederer celebrates Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine Catholic Rite.

The Ederer family includes Gerri Navarre, Joe Navarre, Carol Waslewski, Sister Dorothy K. Ederer O.P., Jeanne Murphy Causley, Greg Causley, Father John Ederer and Bob Waslewski (front).

Father John's sister, Jeanne Murphy Causley of Saginaw, said he had a very close relationship with the Holy Spirit and believed "the Holy Spirit could make such a difference. He felt like sometimes that is (an aspect of the spiritual life) that people overlook."

It was the Holy Spirit who drew Father John to the Byzantine Rite of the Catholic Church. Before being ordained a priest in 1977, he was a Franciscan friar and also served as a Catholic schoolteacher within the Capuchin community. He felt a deep connection to the Holy Spirit when attending a Byzantine Divine Liturgy.

Father James Batcha, pastor of St. George Byzantine Catholic Church in Bay City, said Father John not only loved the liturgy, charisms and rich traditions in the Eastern Church, but found a closeness to the Lord there.

"He said he had experienced the Real Presence of our Lord more in the Eastern expression than in the Western expression," Father Batcha said. "That's why he had a love for the Byzantine Rite and he wanted more people to learn about it."



After his ordination as a diocesan priest, Father John petitioned then-Bishop Francis Reh and the bishop of the Byzantine Eparchy to be granted bi-ritual faculties in 1979. Father Batcha said although both rites have similar formats, the Byzantine rite is very Greek in nature. Jeanne said her brother appreciated the ritual in the Byzantine church.

Father Batcha explained there are many similarities in the two rites, but in the Novus Ordo Latin Rite Mass, the priest faces the people, and in the Byzantine Rite, the priest still faces the altar. In the Byzantine Rite, icons are also venerated in a special way.

"He had quite a collection of icons, which we inherited over at St. George and will use during the holy days," Father Batcha said, explaining that at these special times, icons are venerated in the church on a table called a tetrapod. "(Father John) has added to our collection, and we are grateful for that."

Throughout his years of ministry, Father John touched the lives of many people. His sister, Sister Dorothy Ederer, O.P., is collecting stories of people who knew her brother in a book titled, “The Bi-Ritual Priest: The Life of Fr. John Ederer.”

One anecdote submitted by Father John’s friend and brother priest, Father Jim Falsey, reads: “It was evident that he was filled with the Spirit. In my mind, that intensity, vigor, and commitment to the Holy Spirit characterized John’s life.”

Father Falsey remembers Father John as a “cheerleader,” so to speak, for the Holy Spirit.

“One of the cheers, the only one I remember, was: ‘Have you got that SPIRIT?’ Being in a religious school, a seminary no less, the cheer took on a double meaning. ‘Have you got that school spirit?’ and ‘Have you got that HOLY SPIRIT?’ John would shout it out with such enthusiasm, intensity and vigor that his face would turn red with the effort,” he recalled.

Another contributor to the book, Sister Mary Jo Beckett, wrote, “I was honored to meet Father John Ederer. He radiated such joy that I could not help feeling I was in the presence of a Spirit-filled man.”

Along with his ministry in the Byzantine and Latin Rite churches, Father John was active in the Charismatic Renewal within the Diocese of Saginaw. This is a movement which helps the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be unleashed with power in the lives of Christians.

“He served the Charismatic Renewal for decades with teaching and preaching and healing ministries,” said associate liaison to the bishop and director of the Renewal Center Linda Tencza. “He had a special gift (exhortation) for challenging people in their commitment to Christ. He was sought after as a confessor and spiritual director. He was a gift to Renewal in many ways.”

The last several years, Father John still participated in Divine Liturgy at St. George’s whenever he could. Father Batcha said it was important to Father John to help people “understand what St. John Paul II said about the Church breathing with both lungs— both the east and the west— and understanding that we are in union with each other, and how there should be a mutual respect for each other’s rituals.”

The day he died, Father John’s sister Jeanne was with him in the hospital. It was their late father’s birthday. She thought about how they loved to sing as kids, and she told her brother she was going to sing him some of his favorite hymns. When she was done singing, she said she felt the Spirit direct her own words, the same Spirit her brother wanted the world to know.



Father John Ederer celebrates a baptism at St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Beal City in 1988.

Courtesy of the Diocese of Saginaw Archives: Catholic Weekly Records

“It was evident that he was filled with the Spirit. In my mind, that intensity, vigor, and commitment to the Holy Spirit characterized John’s life.” - FATHER JIM FALSEY

“I held his hand and I said, ‘John, your heavenly Father and your earthly father are saying ‘Be not afraid – welcome home.’ A couple of nurses were in the hallway and they came in ... and in just a couple minutes his breathing slowed. We took his hand and we all prayed, and he took his last breath and he went off to the Lord. I keep saying in my prayers, ‘Jesus, thank you so much. It gave me the comfort to know that I was with him and that he was not alone. It was one of those experiences where I could just say, ‘Wow God, thank you for blessing me.’”

As he took his last breaths, it was the richness of his faith, coming from both lungs of the Church, that saw Father John through those final moments on Sept. 23, when he died at age 79.

Ministering in nearly a dozen parishes in the Diocese during his life, he made it part of his ministry to be a uniter even in his death. A Byzantine prayer service (Parastas) was held at St. George Byzantine Church in Bay City a few days before his funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Dominic Parish, Ss. Peter and Paul Church, in Saginaw with permission from Bishop Robert Gruss.

May Father John rest in eternal peace. †

Byzantine Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth
You are everywhere present and fill all things.
Treasury of blessings and Giver of Life,
Come and dwell within in us,
Cleanse us of all stain,
And save our souls, O Gracious One.



MICHELLE DIFRANCO

is a designer and the busy mom of three children.

Photography by Shane Folkertsma

DRESDEN, GERMANY, IS, WITHOUT A DOUBT, ONE OF THE MOST FESTIVE PLACES TO BE DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON. That is because it's home to Striezelmarkt, one of the first Christmas markets, dating back to the early 1400s. Since then, hundreds of large and small markets have popped up to cover a "Christmas Mile" in the old city.

Among the many delicacies sold there, stollen, or Christollen, is the most popular and goes back centuries to the market's beginnings. The Christollen is a traditional sweetbread filled with raisins, nuts, candied fruits and spices, to name a few. The folded dough and oval shape of the cake-like bread, topped off with white icing or powdered sugar, symbolizes the swaddled Christ Child.

As we approach this season in which we celebrate God sending his only Son as the ultimate gift of his love, let us give thanks. Jesus, the fulfillment of God's promise and the Light of the World, comes to us at a time when the days are short and the nights are long. He brings the light of God's love into our world.

"Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice!" (Ps 96:11) ✝



There are many variations of this sweet treat, and the good news is that you can quickly and easily make your own this Christmas season!

NO-YEAST STOLLEN

- 2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- Pinch of ground cardamom
- 1 stick unsalted butter (cold)
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 1 large egg
- 1 ¼ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- ½ cup slivered almonds
- ½ cup golden raisins
- ½ cup chopped dried or candied fruit of choice
- Melted butter and confectioners' sugar (for topping)

Preheat oven to 325°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and spices in a large mixing bowl. Cut the cold butter into small pieces and blend into the flour mixture to form fine crumbs. In a separate smaller bowl, combine the ricotta, egg, vanilla extract, lemon zest, raisins, dried fruit and almonds. Combine the wet and dry ingredients until moistened.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead it until smooth. Roll dough into an oval shape (about 8x10 inches). Fold dough over (longways) until one inch from the edge. Press edge to seal and place on parchment-lined baking sheet.

Bake for 40 minutes or until golden brown and an inserted toothpick comes out clean. Transfer to a cooling rack. Brush with melted butter and generously sprinkle with confectioners' sugar. Stollen will keep well for up to two weeks stored in an airtight container.



Approaching the holidays: Can Joy be present with Sorrow?

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom 15:13)

Advent is coming to an end. It has been a time of waiting, anticipating, remembering and hoping. It is a time of waiting, anticipating, remembering and hoping. These reflections can be painful when we have lost someone close and are consumed with sorrow. Our churches prepare with joyful anticipation and yet, for some, sadness is very present. Scripture comforts us as we ask, *How do we turn our 'mourning into dancing'?* (Ps 30:11-12)

Cultivate gratefulness. Bring the positive into focus. When my brother died of COVID-19, we were unable to be with him in his hospital intensive care unit or with his family who were at home and in quarantine. Instead, we remained grateful that his wife was allowed a visit and his priest could be present to pray and anoint him. We thanked God his parents had gone before him, as his sudden death would have been devastating for them. Look closely to see God's hand.

Start a new tradition (or change one). Many bereaved families who are anticipating – and sometimes dreading – holiday times have noted the challenge of most family traditions. One bereaved mother wrapped gifts for her son as she always had done and then enjoyed them around the tree until two days prior to Christmas when she took them to charity. Holding on and letting go are part of a healthy grief process.

Provide mutual help. Find solace in Matthew 5:4: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Then, try to help another in a similar situation. (2 Cor 1:3-4) Many years ago, and just a few months after we lost a child by miscarriage, our parish priest

asked me to visit another mother who lost her newborn son. Although I was hesitant, Father Nick persisted and remained hopeful we would bring comfort to each other and we did. Neither one of us wanted empty arms that Christmas, but God showed us that we were not alone in our suffering.

Hold onto hope. Eternal life with God gives us hope, therefore, let us not grieve those we lose without the hope God intends. "We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, to make sure that you do not grieve for them as others do, who have no hope." (1 Thes 4:13)

For those of us entering into Advent with heavy hearts, may we practice gratefulness, reach out to others who may be experiencing loss and hold onto God's word with the hope of eternal life. †

DR. LAUREL HILLIKER is a sociologist and the founder of Bearing Loss, Grief Education and Consulting, LLC. She teaches for the University of Michigan-Flint in the Department of Public Health and Health Sciences



Congratulations to our jubilarians!

Many of the priests and deacons serving in the Diocese of Saginaw are celebrating jubilee years. As the priests' Jubilee Mass was postponed in 2020 due to the pandemic, they were also celebrated at this year's annual Mass. Congratulations to all jubilarians, and thank you for your continued service to our Diocese!

Priests (Ordination date in parentheses)



65 Years

Father Raymond Moeggenberg (June 2, 1956)

Father Stanley Surman (June 26, 1956)

***Father Harold R. Sikorski** (July 1, 1956)

60 Years

Father Richard E. Jozwiak (Dec. 20, 1959)

Father Donald J. Eppenbrock (June 4, 1960)

Father Joseph K. Miller (June 4, 1960)

Father Ronald K. (R.K.) LeFleur (June 3, 1961)

50 Years

Father Robert J. Meissner (Dec. 19, 1969)

Father James M. Fitzpatrick (Feb. 13, 1971)

Msgr. Francis B. Koper (May 22, 1971)

40 Years

Father David L. Parsch (January 18, 1980)

Father John S. Mancini, OSFS (May 24, 1980)

Father John F. Cotter (July 18, 1980)

Father James Wm. Bessert (Sept. 27, 1980)

**Father Harold Sikorski was ordained a priest 65 years ago this past July. He died on Oct. 10. A story about his priestly ministry will be shared in the next issue of FAITH Saginaw.*

Permanent Deacons



45 Years

Deacon Larry Fussman – Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Mount Pleasant

15 Years

Deacon Al Oliver – St. Brigid of Kildare Parish, Midland

10 Years

Deacon Jim Damitio – Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Mount Pleasant

Deacon Stanley Kuczynski – Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish, Bay City

Deacon Gary Patelski – Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption Parish, Saginaw

Deacon Mike Smith – St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Beal City

This year's Permanent Deacon Jubilee Mass was offered in memory of Permanent Deacons David Kasprzyk and George Keller.

Professed religious



50 Years since profession of first vows

Father Daniel Fox, OFM Cap. (1970)

Father Frank Voris, OFM Cap. (1970)

Since 2020 was their jubilee year, Father Daniel and Father Frank celebrated their jubilee Mass on Oct. 3, marking 51 years.

18 lay ministers commissioned and recommissioned

At the annual Lay Ministry Commissioning and Renewal Mass on Oct. 17, Bishop Robert Gruss missioned and commissioned 18 lay ministers from across the diocese. Many additional lay ministers renewed their commissioning or received permanent status.

At the end of a four-year formation experience designed for lay people who want to enhance their understanding of Scripture and Catholic theology, participants are “missioned” to fulfill their baptismal call by serving others. Many lay ministers play an active role in their parish ministries.

The lay ministers commissioned or missioned at this year’s liturgy are:

All Saints, Bay City

Jay Bradshaw
Linda Bradshaw
Betty Schubert

Blessed Sacrament, Midland

Christine Buchalski
Donald Buchalski
Timothy Richard

St. John Paul II Parish, Carrollton

Christine Bustamante

Nativity of the Lord, Alma/St. Louis

Dennis Casnovsky

St. Michael, Maple Grove

John Copes

Our Lady of Hope, Clare

Diane Craven



Christine Buchalski of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Midland is commissioned by Bishop Robert Gruss.

Our Lady of Peace, Bay City

Rebecca Dengler

St. Francis de Sales, Bridgeport

Ray Eickholt

St. Brigid of Kildare, Midland

Kathryn Joffre
Barbara Rice

Ss. Francis & Clare, Birch Run

Peter Kleinebreil

St. John Vianney, Saginaw

Rose Langdon

Our Lady of Grace, Sanford

Laura Scheibert

St. Michael, Maple Grove

Leonard Stankiewicz

Ramah recognized at annual Red Mass

Each year, members of the legal profession gather to celebrate Mass, recite the Lawyer’s Oath and honor one of their own with the Edward J. McArdle Memorial Tribute.

Sarah Ramah Ortega accepted the Edward J. McArdle Memorial Tribute on behalf of her father, Peter G. Ramah, J.D. The award is given each year to an individual for exceptional service in the legal profession and significant community contributions. Peter is one of the founders of the St. Gerard Society, which provides scholarships for Nouvel Catholic Central School students.



Sarah Ramah Ortega, left, and her husband Donovan Ortega represent Peter G. Ramah (Sarah’s father) after he was awarded the Edward J. McArdle Memorial Tribute.

Photo by Jeff Schrier

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Annual golf classic and banquet support six seminarians

Supporters from across the Diocese of Saginaw joined Bishop Robert Gruss at the annual Bishop's Charity Golf Classic and Banquet to support seminarians on Sept. 15 and 16 at the Swan Valley Golf Course and Horizons Conference Center.

The golf classic included 168 golfers in two flights, and 225 guests joined the banquet and silent auction. All proceeds from the events support seminarian education and vocations. As the approximate average expenses for the 2021-22 academic year are \$38,600 per seminarian, each participant played a valuable role in supporting our future priests.

While most seminarians were unable to join the event, their life-sized cardboard cutouts were present at both events to greet guests. The banquet also featured musical entertainment from our priests, a religious sister and a seminarian.

The Diocese's six seminarians are spread out among four seminaries in four states: Mundelein Seminary in Illinois (Matthew Gembrowski and Jacob Hugo), Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit (Joshua High and Charles Warner), Sacred Heart Seminary in Wisconsin (Daniel Christe) and St. Meinrad Seminary in Indiana (Andy Cipolla).



Dan Brooks, Ty Hansen and Roy Kinkela cheer on teammate Joe Sisco as he putts. The team won the Knights of the Day afternoon flight.

Congratulations to the winners of the Bishop's Charity Golf Classic!

MORNING FLIGHT

Knights of the Day: Father Artman Council #5280 (Gladwin) - Al Arends, Keith Mcauley, Dan Smith and Larry Stoinsky

Mixed Team: Bishop Robert Gruss, Vicki White, Hunter Swogger and Judge Patrick McGraw

Regular Flight: The Mail Room Services - Dick Blazejewski, Louie McKalg, Samie Boudiab and Scott Carmona

AFTERNOON FLIGHT

Knights of the Day: Father Artman Council #5280 (Gladwin) - Dan Brooks, Ty Hansen, Roy Kinkela and Joe Sisco

Mixed Team: St. Mark Parish (AuGres) - Colleen Snyder, Sheree Wiltse, Allison Wiltse and Anita Shillair

Regular Flight: Jolt Credit Union - Tom Zirkle, Jerd Clayton, Chris Sarmiento and Noah Ferrio

Join faithful from across the Diocese of Saginaw for

Nine Days for Life

JAN. 21 - 29

presented by the Respect Life Office, Office of Parish Life and Evangelization and the Knights of Columbus. Including Mass, Adoration, reflections and more at selected parishes throughout the Diocese. Visit www.saginaw.org for more information.

CATHEDRAL MASSES:

Jan. 21: Novena for Life begins at 6:30 p.m.

Jan. 22: Mass for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

Day of prayer and fasting for Supreme Court's Dobbs case

Jan. 29: Conclusion Mass





Megan Wolfgang helps her sons Henrik and Brantley pack their Boxes of Joy.

Filling a “Box of Joy” fosters Christmas spirit

Before the tree goes up or presents get wrapped, faith formation students at Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish, Bay City, assemble extra-special gifts.

STORY AND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DANIELLE MCGREW
TENBUSCH

These “Boxes of Joy” are filled with gifts, clothing, school supplies and hygiene items and delivered to children in developing nations by Cross Catholic Outreach.

Six years ago, OLC’s faith formation director, Mary Roth, decided the parish’s Advent Family Day should be a service project. She discovered the Box of Joy project and loved its mission.

“The kids learn ... one, about service, and two, about actually living their faith by doing these little things and sharing what they have,” she said.

Faith formation students and their families gathered on Nov. 21 to fill about 50 boxes. They brought small gifts to combine with donations from the parish to send to the Central American and Caribbean nations Cross Catholic Outreach serves. For many children, the Box of Joy may be the only Christmas gift they receive.

“I feel very good they get a present. I think about what (the child) would like,” said Clayton Smutek of Bay City. “If you give a present to someone else, it helps someone have a good day.”

One of Mary’s goals for the project was to help the children learn about almsgiving and spiritual preparation during Advent as we ready our hearts for Christmas. By giving these gifts to children they will never meet in this life, it encourages participants to direct their focus outward.

“We pray over the boxes and they talk about them in their classroom, and they think and



Each Box of Joy from Cross Catholic Outreach is delivered to a child in a developing country. In 2020, Cross Catholic Outreach delivered 61,422 boxes to children in Guatemala, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Grenada and Honduras.



Ashton LaGrow and Clayton Smutek select flip flops for their Boxes of Joy.



Emily Kocks picks out a shirt to add to her Box of Joy.

wonder about the child who’s going to receive their gift,” Mary said. “It helps them to be more giving and helps them think about what they have.”

Some kids, she said, have begun a yearly practice of going through their things and donating what they no longer need.

“We feel like we need to do something big and grand ... (but) we have so many opportunities to do the little things around us,” Mary said. “They can change someone’s whole entire world with a shoebox full of (gifts).” †

Growing the faith through gifts:

Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan celebrates 15 years, announces new giving society

A coming-of-age: this is how Father Andy Booms described the 15th anniversary of the Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan during a celebratory Mass on Oct. 7.

STORY AND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DANIELLE MCGREW
TENBUSCH

During the anniversary celebration at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw, CCFMM supporters thanked God for the way the CCFMM has grown to serve both donors and fund recipients—and looked forward to what the future holds.

“It was a grace-filled evening,” said Kristin Smith, CCFMM executive director, of the evening’s event. “I could sense the Holy Spirit was there.”

The celebration began with praying the Rosary in thanksgiving, as Oct. 7 is the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Attendees also received a blessed rosary in a pouch bearing the CCFMM anniversary logo. Following the Rosary, Father Andy celebrated Mass and the evening concluded with a reception in the Cathedral’s lower level.

“In many respects we gather today to celebrate the coming of age of the vision to secure the future ministry needs of the Diocese of Saginaw and her schools and parishes. What once was small ... is now something that makes an impression on the various benefactors the endowed funds serve,” Father Andy said.

Those who have been involved in the CCFMM over the years gathered to recall the journey and view a message from Archbishop Robert Carlson, who spearheaded the CCFMM’s formation.

Dr. Michael Wolohan, the current board of trustees’ president, sees the celebration as an expression of gratitude and acknowledgement of all those who have built up the CCFMM over the years.

“We talk a lot about time, talent and treasure. There have been many people over the years who have contributed ... all of those at different times and in different ways,” he said. “It is a bit like the Gospel story of the loaves and fishes when everybody puts in what they have to share, creating an abundance for all.”

The CCFMM is uniquely positioned to support the ministries of the diocese, individual parishes, Catholic schools and our bishop’s priorities and goals.

“It really is an opportunity to, through a Catholic lens, stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in our community, Catholic and non-Catholic, and hopefully to be a bright light of Christ’s love for each other,” Michael said.

“These 15 years have laid the groundwork for the next 15 to 50 years,” said Kristin.

Looking forward, Kristin said she hopes the CCFMM will continue to follow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to serve the Catholic and greater community.

“The CCFMM is a conduit for matching donor desires with the needs of the Catholic community and to do so in a transparent way that earns trust and provides assurances to donors that their intentions will always be honored and followed,” she said. “We aim to be an instrument of strengthening the ministries of the Church in the future.”

One way in which the CCFMM is working to ensure they will be such an instrument for years to come is by establishing the new St. Joseph Giving Society.

“The St. Joseph Giving Society will provide support to the foundation’s operational budget and other CCFMM evangelization efforts,” Kristin explained.

The St. Joseph Giving Society donations will be split between current operating expenses, an operating endowment and evangelization efforts.

The first evangelization goal is to provide Bibles for all sixth-grade students in Catholic schools and faith formation programs in parishes across the Diocese.

“We’re growing the faith through gifts,” Kristin said. ✚



For more information, call the CCFMM’s executive director Kristin Smith at 989.599.0079 or kristin.smith@ccfmm.org

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.



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1 The CCFMM 15th Anniversary Celebration was marked on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, Oct. 17. Attendees were offered a rosary.

2 Kristin Smith, CCFMM executive director, leads attendees in the Rosary before Mass.

3 The St. Joseph Giving Society will help grow the CCFMM to support the Catholic community for generations to come.

4 Mike Cavanaugh, past president Mike Shabluk and trustee Mike Leen lead the procession at the beginning of Mass.

5 William Jungerheld proclaims the first reading at Mass.

6 Gayle and Jerry Blaxton carry the gifts to the altar.

7 Dr. Michael Wolohan, president of the CCFMM, welcomes attendees to the anniversary celebration.

8 Maureen Becker, a member of the CCFMM's development and marketing committees, applauds during the organization's 15th Anniversary Celebration.

9 Father Andy Booms described the CCFMM's 15th anniversary as their "coming of age" during his homily.

10 Attendees listen to a video message from Archbishop Robert Carlson, who spearheaded the formation of the CCFMM during his time in the Diocese of Saginaw.



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Christmas Day **Mass**

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