

THE MAGAZINE

Issue 5, 2022

OF THE CATHOLIC

DIOCESE OF

SAGINAW

faith *Saginaw*



Blessed by **ADOPTION**

**GRATEFUL FOR LIFE,
FRANKENMUTH TEEN
ENCOURAGES OTHERS TO
VOTE 'NO' ON PROPOSAL 3**



*Special report on
Proposal 3 inside*

SPECIAL REPORT

How Proposal 3 can harm Michigan women and children

FEATURE

Couple finds healing, forgiveness in post-abortive ministry

FAITH MATTERS

What our Faith says about ghosts



Getty Images/Altopics

Will you speak for the ‘little ones?’

Someone recently shared with me a video of Mother Teresa circulating on social media. It was recorded in 1979, but relevant 40+ years later.



ERIN LOOBY CARLSON is editor of FAITH Saginaw magazine and director of communications for the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw.

The video features Mother Teresa’s Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, in which she used her platform to speak for the “little ones.”

As we prepare to vote in November, I hope we, too, will speak for the little ones. The thought of placing in our state constitution the right to abortion on demand through all nine months of pregnancy is too much to stomach.

As Father Joe points out in his column on page 14, at some point, from a scientific standpoint, we must all (pro-life and pro-choice alike) be able to agree: “This is a life.” Proposal 3 would forever, by virtue of a constitutional amendment, allow abortion up through birth.

As you will see on the pages that follow, there are many other concerns hidden in the carefully crafted and radically extreme Reproductive Freedom for All, Proposal 3 ballot initiative.

Women and children deserve better.

Please take time to read more about Proposal 3 and when you’re done, share it with someone else.

In this battle for life, the little ones are counting on us to speak for them. If not us, then who?

Come Holy Spirit! †

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PROMOTE THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

by voting “NO” to Proposal 3

Dear Friends in Christ,
Many years ago, St. Mother Teresa challenged the world with these words: *“Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what it wants. That is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion.”*



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



Scan this code to hear the bishop's homily from Respect Life Sunday.

In a few short weeks, the citizens of Michigan will be going to the polls to cast their votes to select their candidates for office. But also on the ballot is a pro-abortion initiative spearheaded by Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union called “Reproductive Freedom For All,” which seeks to amend the state constitution to allow unregulated abortion on demand through all nine months of pregnancy. On the ballot it will appear as Proposal 3. It is the most radical abortion legislation in the country. This proposal is devious and presents a grave concern for the unborn, pregnant women in need, children and parents.

Voters will be asked if the state constitution should be amended to create a right to abortion throughout pregnancy with no regulations, no opportunity for the legislature to change the law and no limitations on who can obtain an abortion from any person, at any time, without consequences. It would also affect parental rights regarding an abortion involving their children. The vague language on the ballot itself says it will “invalidate state laws conflicting with this amendment.” In other words, if passed, the proposal would result in the elimination of many current Michigan laws relating to abortion, including laws prohibiting partial-birth abortion and taxpayer-funded abortion, laws requiring parental consent and informed consent for abortion, laws protecting the conscience rights of persons who refuse to participate in abortion and more. The proposal would prohibit lawsuits from being brought against any individual

for performing an abortion, even when complications result from the procedure.

Proposal 3 is not about “reproductive freedom”, but rather about revoking the rights of the unborn, pregnant women in need, children and parents.

On behalf of the Catholic dioceses of Michigan, the Michigan Catholic Conference has partnered with Right to Life Michigan and other pro-life organizations to form a coalition called Citizens to Support MI Women and Children to oppose and, ultimately, to defeat this extreme and dangerous proposal. To learn more about ways to engage and support this important work, visit their website: www.supportmiwomenandchildren.org.

Every human person is a “manifestation of God in the world, a sign of his presence, a trace of his glory” (Gospel of Life, 34). And therefore, we must reflect this truth in how we act and in how we treat one another. We must never be afraid to proclaim this truth, but with love and compassion and mercy. This is how we respond to the abortion crisis in our world.

“The Lord has called you from birth, from your mother’s womb he gave you your name,” Isaiah tells us. These words reveal that each child conceived in the womb reveals the heart and desire of God, for the child, the mother, the family. But a mother facing an unexpected pregnancy may find it difficult to receive this gift God has given her. She may not see the child as a gift, but a burden. This is where the Church, the Body of Christ comes in. Women facing challenging pregnancies should see the Church as a place where they can find help, where they can find support, and where they can be loved. What they need is a witness to love and to life, a witness of care and concern, for both the woman and child.

This is why, as Catholics, we must continue to accompany mothers in need and to welcome their babies into the world. Motherhood is a beautiful and sacred vocation. Besides ongoing prayer, being part of the nationwide effort “Walking with Moms in Need” is a way to get involved. More information may be found on our diocesan website, www.Saginaw.org, or at www.walkingwithmoms.com. It is a way parishes can respond to Pope Francis’ challenge to be ‘islands of mercy in a sea of indifference.’



If passed, the proposal would result in the elimination of many of current Michigan laws relating to abortion, including laws prohibiting partial-birth abortion and taxpayer-funded abortion, laws requiring parental consent and informed consent for abortion, laws protecting the conscience rights of persons who refuse to participate in abortion and more.”

How can you help to defeat this extreme abortion proposal?

PRAY: This moment is an invitation and opportunity for all of us to bring this proposal into the spiritual realm of our lives through prayer and fasting. Let us storm heaven with our prayers and sacrifices.

ENGAGE: Learn more about this issue on our diocesan website: www.saginaw.org. Engage your circle of influence regarding this proposal. Let others know how destructive this proposal is to human life and our culture.

VOTE: Register to vote and vote NO to Proposal 3, the most extreme abortion proposal in our country. To vote in favor of this proposal would be to actively participate in the promotion and expansion of the intrinsic moral evil of abortion.

Friends, love compels us to ‘go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation’ (Mk 16:15). Let us band together in promoting the Gospel of Life, praying that this destructive proposal will be defeated.

Building a better world is the call of all of us. A world which is just, a world which values the dignity of others, especially the unborn, those who are suffering, those on the margins of society and the stranger among us. This is our time for such building.

Let us always place our trust in the Lord and ask for his continuous guidance as we continue the fight for the sanctity of all human life. †

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.

THURSDAY, NOV. 10

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, 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

Upcoming dates and more information on the Holy Hours can be found at www.saginaw.org.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



UNDERSTANDING THE BALLOT LANGUAGE

The Reproductive Freedom for All constitutional amendment is being proposed by Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union. The amendment is not about protecting existing rights; instead, it smuggles an extreme proposal into the Michigan Constitution that would repeal or drastically alter dozens of other state laws. The amendment would fundamentally change the relationships between parents and children, as well as women and their doctors.

Below is the summary of the amendment that will appear on the ballot in November:

A proposal to amend the state constitution to establish new individual right to reproductive freedom, including right to make all decisions about pregnancy and abortion; allow state to regulate abortion in some cases; and forbid prosecution of individuals exercising this established right.

This proposed constitutional amendment would:

- *Establish new individual right to reproductive freedom, including right to make and carry out all decisions about pregnancy, such as prenatal care, childbirth, postpartum*

care, contraception, sterilization, abortion, miscarriage management, and infertility;

- *Allow state to regulate abortion after fetal viability, but not prohibit if medically needed to protect a patient's life or physical or mental health;*
- *Forbid state discrimination in enforcement of this right; prohibit prosecution of an individual, or a person helping a pregnant individual, for exercising rights established by this amendment;*
- *Invalidate state laws conflicting with this amendment.*

As you can read for yourself, the language employed is vague and even pretty confusing. So, what would adding this amendment to the Michigan constitution do? Here are just some of the likely outcomes:

- Legalize abortion at any time in pregnancy for any reason, including late-term and partial-birth abortions.
- Revoke parental consent for abortions, thus allowing any person to help teens obtain abortions without their parents knowing.
- Revoke parental consent for sterilizing medical procedures for gender-confused young people.
- Permit abortions to be performed by anyone, even those without a medical license.
- Protect abortion providers from penalties for killing or injuring a woman during an abortion.
- Revoke state law that requires abortion facilities to be licensed and inspected.
- Require taxpayers to pay for abortions.†



TEN TIPS (PLUS ONE!) for discussing Michigan's abortion ballot measure

It's likely we'll all have opportunities to talk about the upcoming state vote on abortion. Whether it's a casual conversation with a neighbor or friend, or a more structured discussion with a campaign representative, you may be asked to share your thoughts on the proposal. What will you say, and how can you keep important relationships strong, even if you disagree?

The first step — and the most important one of all — is prayer. Talk to God before you talk to anyone else, and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and guide your words. Filled with this peace, your conversation is sure to be a fruitful one. Once your spirit is settled, it's time to begin. Here are 10 easy steps:

- 1 CHECK YOURSELF.** Before you start talking, you should make sure you know how far you're willing to take the conversation and be prepared to give yourself an "out" if things get heated. You can always decide to take a break and return to the conversation later, or agree to disagree. Conversely, you don't have to be a doormat. If someone else tries to force their views onto you, you must decide when it's important to speak up or step back. Only you can decide where the appropriate boundaries are going to be for you.
- 2 CHECK YOUR FACTS.** Don't open a conversation you're not ready to have. If you haven't thought much about your position, your arguments or your facts, you could quickly find yourself in way over your head. Do your homework and be prepared to speak thoughtfully and sincerely.
- 3 BE HONEST AND CURIOUS.** These conversations are not comfortable for anyone. Acknowledge all the feelings involved and be prepared to act in ways that are vulnerable and open. Ask good questions and listen well — after all, you're trying to understand as much as you are trying to be understood.
- 4 TRY TO FIND SHARED EXPERIENCES.** Facts and data points are never going to be as convincing as when one heart truly speaks to another. Use your heart as a resource and a guide for a conversation that enriches, informs, and loves deeply.
- 5 THIS ISN'T A PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE.** Don't perform, shoot "zingers" or try to score points at the expense of your relationship. Be real, thoughtful and sincere — after all, your integrity and sensitivity are going to be far more convincing than any fancy one-liner.
- 6 DON'T ENGAGE IN "SHAMING" BEHAVIOR.** When someone feels defensive or embarrassed, they stop hearing you. Let your conversation be hopeful and friendly, so your relationship will still be intact when you're done speaking.
- 7 YOU HAVE TWO EARS AND ONE MOUTH.** Use them proportionally. Really listening to the people you're in conversation with will help you better understand where they're coming from.
- 8 FIND COMMON GROUND.** Most people value the same things — truly! Start with neutral statements and always seek the ideas and feelings you share — at the end of the conversation, these are the most important things to take with you.
- 9 AVOID ANGER.** Don't let your emotions carry you away. It's OK to disagree with someone and love them at the same time. Christ does this throughout the Gospels, and you can do it too!
- 10 REMEMBER TO REST IN THE POWER OF YOUR CONVICTIONS.** Even if you don't succeed in convincing someone else of your arguments, you don't have to change your mind. The most important action you'll take, after all, isn't in a personal chat with your neighbor, but in making sure you make it to the polls on Election Day! †



NINE FALSEHOODS

Truth will make us free: Debunking nine falsehoods of ‘reproductive rights’

BY DR. JOANNE CASTILLO AND DANIEL HILKER

She’s a doctor. He’s a lawyer. Meet Dr. Joanne Castillo and Daniel Hilker, married parishioners at St. Mary in Williamston. FAITH Magazine asked Joanne and Daniel to assess the claims being made by the pro-abortion lobby in the current debate over the proposed “Right to Reproductive Freedom” amendment to the constitution of Michigan. Here’s their take:

You may have heard some of the claimed benefits of the amendment: “Protect miscarriage care!” “Protect women!” “Don’t take away the right to choose!” “My body, my choice!” “Save Roe!”

If you read nothing else in this article, know that the amendment does not restore the *Roe* status quo, rather it unwinds nearly all of Michigan’s *Roe*- and *Casey*-compliant abortion regulations and leaves Michigan’s legislators virtually powerless to regulate abortion, sterilization and gender transition therapy. Under *Roe* and *Casey*, Michigan’s laws required parental consent for minors, required safe care, and limited elective abortion to “pre-viability.” The amendment changes all this and more.

The proposed “Right to Reproductive Freedom” amendment to Michigan’s constitution is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. The proposal was circulated and sponsored by Planned Parenthood, and it threatens to change Michigan’s constitution to make abortion legal until birth and allow for abortions and sterilizations for minors without parental consent. The proposal would affect over 25 laws that are already in place to protect women, protect unborn children and prevent taxpayer-funded abortions.

Elective abortion always harms women. Elective abortion is always an act of violence against the most vulnerable. It always ends the life of a child, a human being that is unrepeatable, created in the image and likeness of God, body and soul from the moment of conception, with a unique genomic sequence, personality, and God-given mission. This “hardline” Catholic perspective is not the subject of this article, instead let’s turn to the claims made by the amendment proponents:

The ballot proposal rides on the violent swell of progressive reaction to the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* decision, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* and decades of federal court restrictions on state law regulating abortion.

1. The amendment restores women’s rights under *Roe*.

FALSE.

This amendment is so far beyond *Roe* that it cannot fully be explained in one

sitting. Take this direct quote for example:

[T]he state may regulate the provision of abortion care after fetal viability, provided that in no circumstance shall the state prohibit an abortion that, in the professional judgment of an attending health care professional, is medically indicated to protect the life or physical or mental health of the pregnant individual.

The text of the amendment is not a loophole. Court interpretation of Michigan's constitution starts and ends with the text itself. Unless the amendment is defeated, abortion will be legal in Michigan up to birth under the "physical or mental health" exception. As any woman knows, a normal,

healthy delivery is a risk to the mother's "physical health." Obstetric emergencies, like severe bleeding and amniotic fluid embolism, can even cause death during delivery. If a determination is made that an abortion will protect a mother from this danger to her physical health, then the abortion is permissible. Also, since "health care professional" includes a wide variety of professions, the "mental health" or "physical health" determination could be made by a nurse or a social worker, among others. Nothing in the text indicates that the same "health care professional" who makes the determination must be the one who performs the abortion. Therefore, a referral network of psychologists or social workers to abortion physicians could further insulate providers from laws against post-viability abortion. The plain text here

says that abortion will be legal until birth in Michigan. This is not a return to *Roe*.

2. The amendment preserves the rights of the next generation.

FALSE.

Parents are essential to the formation of their minor children. It is necessary that children be counseled by their parents regarding life-altering medical decisions. This counseling is a right for both parents and children. However, the amendment clearly provides that a minor girl can seek and obtain an abortion without parental knowledge or consent. The amendment further provides that a minor boy or girl can seek and obtain permanent sterilization or hormone therapy without parental knowledge or consent.

According to the amendment:

Every individual has a fundamental right to reproductive freedom, which entails the right to make and effectuate decisions about all matters relating to pregnancy, including but not limited to prenatal care, childbirth, postpartum care, contraception, sterilization, abortion care, miscarriage management, and infertility care ... The state shall not discriminate in the protection or enforcement of this fundamental right.

This means no discrimination on the basis of age. This "care" could include secret counseling in favor of abortion. "Care" could include secret treatment of gender-confused children that results in hormonal sterilization. Such treatment is likely to have permanent harmful effects, especially in prepubertal minors. The amendment is a direct attack on the rights of Michigan parents and children.

3. The amendment protects a woman's right to choose.

FALSE.

Medical professionals have the duty to provide detailed information of risks versus benefits to patients in order for them to make an informed decision regarding medical and/or surgical treatments. Providing this information allows for



Bridget Jacquain, campus minister and theology instructor at Nouvel Catholic Central High School, participates in the 2020 Saginaw March for Life. Photo by Jeff Schrier.

“informed consent.” However, the amendment reduces the consent threshold from “informed” to “voluntary.” “Voluntary consent” merely means that there is no coercion or deceit on the part of the practitioner. A woman cannot freely choose an abortion until she is informed. She should be informed of the fundamental risks associated with abortion and that certain risks are higher during an abortion procedure than during childbirth. Further, the amendment would not allow patients to sue in malpractice against a physician who failed to inform them of the significant health risks posed by an abortion or sterilization procedure. The physician has a clear defense under the text of the amendment. The amendment protects physicians, not a woman’s right to make informed choices.

4.

The amendment protects “miscarriage care.”

FALSE.

A patient would never be punished for having an

involuntary miscarriage or a stillbirth, even under Michigan’s 1931 law that is currently in litigation. Miscarriage and stillbirth are medical situations in which the unborn child dies spontaneously. Miscarriage refers to a death before 20 weeks and stillbirth occurs at 20 weeks or more of gestation. The term stillbirth also refers to fetal death during birth. Women will always be able to receive medical care for a miscarriage or stillbirth under current law, as the mother did not intend to end the life of the child in the womb. The amendment does nothing to protect “miscarriage care;” it merely hides abortion care under this false mantle.

5.

The amendment allows medical treatment for an ectopic pregnancy.

FALSE.

An ectopic pregnancy is a medical emergency, and women are always able to receive medical care in this situation. An ectopic pregnancy is defined as an

extrauterine pregnancy, in which the baby is found outside of the uterus. The treatment approach can be different depending on whether the fetus has already died or not, the size of the baby, if the mother is stable or not, and her ability to seek medical care in case of an emergency. Most ectopic pregnancies occur in the fallopian tube, but other possible sites include cervix, hysterectomy scar from a previous cesarean section, ovaries or abdomen, among other places. Having an ectopic pregnancy places the mother at risk of dying from hemorrhage if the area would rupture. Women are receiving and will always receive care for ectopic pregnancy, which is a life-saving treatment for the mother. The amendment does not create any new protection for treatment of ectopic pregnancy; it is an abortion amendment.

6.

The amendment protects health care professionals from going to prison for performing vital fertility, miscarriage and pregnancy services.

FALSE.

No law, not even the 1931 statute that is currently in dispute in the courts, prevents doctors from providing these services. The 1931 law makes elective abortions illegal, and a doctor who performs an elective abortion would be guilty of a crime and could be threatened with prison. Current Michigan law allows care for spontaneous miscarriage, fertility or pregnancy services.

7.

The amendment prevents prosecution of doctors for performing abortions where the mother’s life is at risk.

FALSE.

This protection is already enshrined in Michigan’s laws. The protection appears in multiple statutes, even the 1931 law. The amendment text goes far beyond *Roe*-era statutes. It provides that no “health care professional” can have an “adverse action” taken against them for “aiding or assisting” in the exercise of “reproductive freedom.” This is a radical increase in protection from regulation, since the amendment states that no pre-viability law can “infringe on that individual’s autonomous decision-making.” How will Michigan legislate against or prosecute the next Kermit Gosnell when the law must bow to the “autonomous decision-making” of patients?

8.

This amendment is needed to prevent “health care professionals” from going to prison for providing abortion care.

MOSTLY FALSE.

Under current law, licensed physicians can perform abortions in certain circumstances. The amendment does not restrict abortion care to physicians. The amendment uses the term “health care professionals.” In Michigan,



“health care professionals” include acupuncturists, athletic trainers, audiologists, chiropractors, dentists, dietitians, family therapists, massage therapists, nurses, social workers, psychologists and veterinarians, among others. The amendment is unclear whether such persons could actually perform abortions; however, it is abundantly clear that these “professionals” can decide whether a third-trimester fetus is “viable.” If, in the unreviewable “professional judgment” of a “health care professional” the fetus is not viable, then an abortion could be obtained, even up to birth.

9. The amendment protects women.

FALSE.

This amendment would invalidate state laws that require abortion clinics to meet the same basic safety standards as other health care facilities, such as hospitals and outpatient surgery centers. Under the amendment, no law can be enacted regarding safety standards if that law “infringe[s] on that individual’s autonomous decision-making” during pre-viability. This means that no state law can prevent a woman from seeking a cheap back-alley abortion from an unlicensed physician. This may sound radical. It is.

The amendment would allow minors to obtain hormonal sterilization and gender transition therapy without parental knowledge or consent. Children need their parents. Children need their parents, especially

on gender and sexuality issues. Our culture of experimentation, promiscuity and media bias has an obvious bent toward gender reversal. Our children should not be left without their parents in this storm of gender confusion.

The amendment would allow abortion throughout pregnancy until birth, which is a tremendous mistake. Elective abortion is not health care; it is the violent death of the unborn child. Abortion has serious inherent risks, and women deserve to be fully informed. We now know that induced abortions have been associated with an increased risk of infection, hemorrhage, preterm birth, future miscarriages, infertility, cardiovascular disease and death. Abortion also has been shown to increase the risk of breast cancer, anxiety, depression and suicide.

Pregnant women and minors need health care professionals that provide ethical, life-affirming, high-quality and evidence-based medical care. We need to provide support and legal protection to the expectant mother and her baby or babies. We do not need this amendment.

Do not just trust us on this. Read on your own, talk to others, and make an informed decision before Nov. 8. We recommend John Bursch’s article in the *Detroit Free Press*, “Proposed Reproductive Freedom

Initiative Goes too Far”,^[1] “Overview of Michigan Ballot Initiative” from the Lozier Institute^[2] and the full text of the “Right to Reproductive Freedom” amendment itself.^[3] There are and will be many articles providing contrary theories about what the text of the amendment means; see for example, the *Detroit Free Press* article purporting to state, “What it will and won’t do if approved.”^[4] Read these contrary theories as well. You are a Michigander, and on Nov. 8, you are a legislator. What should your constitution say? †



■ **Psalm 139: 13-16** “You formed me in 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. My bones are not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, fashioned in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me unformed; in your book all are written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be.”

^[1] <https://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2022/07/10/opinion-abortion-rights-amendment-too-extreme/10017484002/>

^[2] <https://lozierinstitute.org/overview-of-michigan-ballot-initiative-right-to-reproductive-freedom/>

^[3] <https://mireproductivefreedom.org/article-1-section-28-right-to-reproductive-freedom/>

^[4] <https://www.freep.com/story/news/politics/2022/08/16/michigan-abortion-law-amendment/10296812002/>





OB-GYN Dr. Monticello says: VOTE NO TO STOP PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTION

Editor's note: This story contains descriptions of abortion.

Dr. Michelle Monticello, who belongs to St. Brigid of Kildare Parish in Midland, along with her family, has helped bring “approximately 1,500 babies” into this world.

“I stopped counting after my obstetrics and gynecology residency in 1995, so it’s hard to say,” suggests Dr. Monticello modestly to *FAITH* Magazine.

With more than two decades of experience as an OB-GYN, Dr. Monticello is medical director at Life Choices of Central Michigan in Mount Pleasant, where she oversees several programs including ultrasounds for pregnant women and a free health clinic “for our mostly college age students.”

“It’s a job that is wonderful and challenging all at the same time,” she says. “We do see pregnant women on all sides of the spectrum. Some are very stressed out and some are elated, so we try to meet them where they are emotionally in the reality of their lives.”

Proposal 3 would permit unrestricted abortion throughout pregnancy including partial-birth abortion. That’s a surgical procedure used in the second and third trimesters of pregnancy that aborts an unborn child by removing him or her from the uterus.

“Once you get beyond 15 to 16 weeks, the fetus is often removed in a piecemeal manner. I don’t know how graphic you want me to be?” Dr. Monticello pauses momentarily.

“They have to account for the fetal parts that they removed to be sure that all of the infant

parts and the placental tissue is removed after the procedure. So, it’s a gruesome way to end a pregnancy. I think it’s got to be a horrific experience for the woman who is undergoing that procedure.”

Dr. Monticello has watched with approval as advances in neonatal healthcare have helped more premature babies survive at an ever earlier age outside the womb, including infants born at 21 or 22 weeks gestation.

“And yet what breaks my heart is when I know an infant could survive outside the womb at a later gestational age and, instead, is terminated and killed in the womb,” Dr. Monticello says. “I find that heartbreaking.”

The partial-birth abortion of an unborn baby with a heartbeat was outlawed in most

cases by the 2003 federal Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act. Dr. Monticello fears that is just one protection for unborn babies — and their mothers — that could be swept away by Proposal 3.

“The big problem is that the proposed constitutional amendment is very vague, it’s poorly worded and, I’d say, intentionally ambiguous so that it can and will

be used to undermine a lot of the other laws that are already in place to protect us,” Dr. Monticello says. Her advice? “You really need to educate yourself about what this constitutional amendment is and what it could potentially do — and then make your decisions based upon that reality.

“I’ve even seen physicians spreading lies about this amendment, which astounds me and worries me and I think, again, people need to be aware of the reality. There’s a lot of hype out there — and a lot of it is not the truth.” †

““
““
What breaks my heart is when I know an infant could survive outside the womb at a later gestational age and, instead, is terminated and killed in the womb.”

DEAR FATHER JOE:

I need help explaining to my family and friends why I oppose the upcoming ballot initiative.

I know I have to tell my family and friends about my reasons for opposing the forthcoming pro-abortion ballot initiative in Michigan, but I want to do it in a way that is charitable and if possible doesn't ruin lifelong friendships. Please help!

I will do my best to help; let's pause, pray and ask Jesus to help us.

I would like to begin with the first part of your question: You write that you "know you have to tell your family and friends your reasons for opposing the forthcoming ballot initiative."

May I humbly suggest that what you are required to do is pray about it?

Some people can exchange ideas, some people can't. There are people who are open to new or challenging ways of thinking and there are people who are not. Jesus is not requiring you to get into shouting matches with people who only want to shout.

Your heart is a treasure that Jesus gave the world: protect that treasure. God is not calling you to attempt to reason with unreasonable people and, if you find you are unreasonable on this topic, you best serve the issue by not attempting to reason. With that, no matter anyone's state of mind, we can pray for them. We can pray that God heals our wounds and the wounds of those who disagree with us.

With that in mind, I would like to share with you my reasons for opposing this ballot initiative and I will focus on my reasons that I believe pro-choicers can (and do!) agree with. Let's dive in!

The crux of my problem with this initiative is that it makes no sense. Here is what I mean by this.

Michigan's radical ballot initiative would proclaim that there really is no point where the being in the womb is human until the moment after that child emerges from the womb. Whether we consider ourselves pro-choice or pro-life, I think we can all agree that scientifically life begins at some point in the womb. If it did not, how would we even distinguish between a premature

baby and a non-person who could simply be aborted?

As far as I can tell, if this initiative is passed, it would be the most radical abortion policy in the world, outside of China and North Korea. I'm not kidding. In every civilized country I could find, there is a point where abortion is illegal,

a point where the citizens of that country have decided "that's a life now." In some countries it's 12 weeks after conception, in others it's 14. Russia had the lowest bar I could find at 24 weeks.

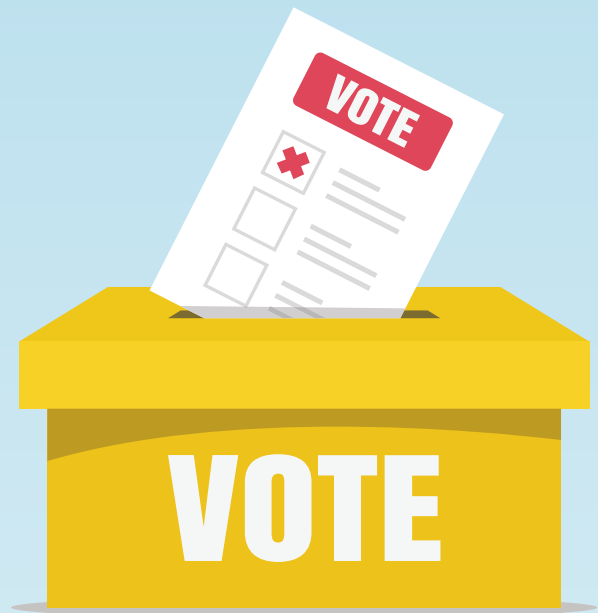
Should this initiative pass, we will have the most permissive abortion laws in the world: abortion any time, for any reason.

Almost every rationale for abortion on demand that I've heard pitched by the abortion industry ignores this truth. The commercials I've seen actually call my objection to this "radical." I would call it logical rather than radical to believe there is some point where that being in the womb is human. If that is not the case, then why do we spend so many medical resources fighting to save the lives of premature babies? It comes down to this: Do we define humanity based on whether someone else wants a person to exist? The much-anticipated baby born prematurely is worthy of saving, but the unwanted baby can be disposed of?

If we really believe this, we have descended into a place of evil.

Alas, this multi-billion dollar abortion industry doesn't seem interested in truth, but in scaring people into voting for something that they may not even believe in.

Perhaps this whole ballot initiative is an opportunity for reasonable people of good will to come together and work out a compromise that both sides hate, but can accept. Our two choices



FATHER JOE KRUPP

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

🐦 @Joeinblack



St. Gerard Majella (1726-55)

FEAST DAY - OCT. 16 | PATRON OF EXPECTANT MOTHERS

In spite of his short life, St. Gerard was considered a saint by the people he served even before his death. His life of service and sacrifice give witness to the power of humble obedience in the face of hardship.

Born into the poor family of an Italian tailor in 1726, Gerard went to work as a tailor's apprentice at age 12 when his father died. Once he provided for his mother and three older sisters, he donated the rest of his profits to the poor. Though rejected by several religious orders due to his poor health, he was accepted by the Redemptorists in 1749. Brother Gerard soon became renowned for his extraordinary obedience as he accepted any and all assignments from his superiors as God's will. He led mission trips and retreats, saving souls and performing miracles wherever he went.

The last recorded miracle attributed to Gerard is thought to be the reason he is considered the patron of expectant mothers. He dropped his handkerchief, and a girl tried to return it to him, but he told her, "Keep it. It will be useful to you someday." After his death years later, the now young woman was dying in childbirth and asked for the handkerchief. When it was brought to her, she was miraculously healed, and her child survived.

When Gerard was near death from tuberculosis, he asked for a sign to be posted above his door that said, "Here the will of God is done, as God wills, and as long as God wills." On Oct. 15, 1755, at the age of just 29, Gerard joined the God he loved. Thousands mourned his loss. Miracles attributed to his intercession were reported throughout Italy in the following years, and Gerard was canonized in 1904. †

simply cannot be "Abortion anytime, anywhere for any reason up until the moment the child leaves the womb" or "No abortion ever, not even to save the life of the mother."

Reasonable and intelligent people can come together and agree that there must be some point that we consider the being in the womb human. Every other country I have found has, why can't we?

I believe with all my heart that this moment is an invitation and opportunity for us to reclaim our sanity. A healthy state does not require people to choose from two extremes and then try to scare and lie to people in order to browbeat them into believing there are only two choices.

As followers of Jesus, we recognize that we live in a multicultural society and, as a result of that, there will always be situations where we are required to accept things we don't like.

As a person who believes in the sanctity of life, it is my fervent hope that "my tribe" embraces the reality that we can do so much good in this fight through our answer to Jesus' call to love and care for the most vulnerable members

of our society.

To my pro-choice friends, please don't be distracted by the scare tactics; this is not about saving the life of the mother. I've been in the pro-life movement for 50 years and have only met two people within it who don't believe saving the life of a mother is a moral reason for an abortion. Two. The rest are totally on board and

consider such a thing common sense.

To my anti-abortion friends, I urge us all to be patient, loving and sacrificial. We can and must give of our time and resources to let any expectant mom know that we are here to provide any help we can to God's people. If we don't put our money and time where our convictions lie, then we are lost indeed. Our willingness to love, give and sacrifice are at least as important as our political activity.

I pray that we embrace our call to hold life sacred at every point along its beautiful continuum, from the moment of conception until the moment the Father calls us home to him. I pray that we who are reasonable do not let the extremists define us, whether pro- or anti-abortion. We must follow the example of Jesus and care for the most vulnerable among us, both mothers and babies, born and unborn. Holy Spirit, give us strength, courage and wisdom! †

“We must follow the example of Jesus and care for the most vulnerable among us, both mothers and babies, born and unborn.”

Blessed by **ADOPTION**

**GRATEFUL FOR LIFE, FRANKENMUTH
TEEN ENCOURAGES OTHERS TO
VOTE 'NO' ON PROPOSAL 3**

BY DENYSE SHANNON | PHOTOGRAPY BY JEFF SCHRIER

When she was 15, Flynn Dupuie told her parents she was glad she wasn't born in the U.S.

"Why?" they asked. "We thought you loved it here."

Her response was telling.

"Because if I was, I would have probably been aborted."

Flynn, now 19, knows she could have been one of the estimated 63 million unborn children who have lost their lives to legalized abortion since the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision.





Kirk and Flynn Dupuie pose for a photo in April 2004 after bringing Flynn to the United States from Russia. *Courtesy photo.*



Flynn Dupuie was born in Russia and was adopted on Friday, April 9, 2004. She was 9 months, 9 days old. *Courtesy photo.*



Kirk, Flynn and Angela Dupuie are pictured in December 2020. *Courtesy photo.*

But Flynn instead was given the chance to live, the chance to ride motorcycles with her dad, to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at Blessed Trinity Parish in Frankenmuth, to graduate from Frankenmuth High School and attend Delta College. Born in Russia, she was adopted by Kirk and Angela Dupuie of Frankenmuth after their decade-long struggle to become parents. They were a gift to each other.

“We went through all the infertility processes and tried adopting domestically,” Kirk recalled.

The Dupuies learned that most unplanned pregnancies resulted in abortion, rather than the child being placed for adoption. They encountered long waitlists for domestic adoptions.

They realized God was leading them to look elsewhere and expanded their search.

“We went to Russia just for the fact that we were tired of waiting,” Kirk said.

“We had been married for 15 years, but it felt as if we were on hold until Flynn came home,” Angela said. “All our friends were having children long before us, and they were moving on as their kids got older.”

It was challenging watching their friends have children and participate in kids’ activities, while the Dupuies waited for their own child.

“There was a couple from our church who were adopting domestically from Adoption Associates out of Lansing,”

“The first time I held Flynn, I knew she was meant to be my daughter.” -ANGELA DUPIE

said Angela. “We went to one of their meetings and decided that Russia was where we wanted to go.”

About a year later they got the call that changed their life: they could meet their new baby. In December 2003, they packed their bags and traveled to Russia for the first time. Flynn was just over five months old.

“The first time I held Flynn I knew she was meant to be my daughter,” Angela said.

A GIFT FOR BOTH BABY AND PARENTS

“On the first trip, the (adoption) agency tries to show you a bit about the country your child is from to get an idea of the culture,” Angela recalled. Still, their focus was on wanting to see their baby. “We had pretty much the whole day to play with and get acquainted with the baby except for nap time and feeding times.”

Their first trip lasted about a week. Choosing to bring Flynn home from Russia wasn’t without its challenges, but Kirk said everything fell into place.

In Russia, children can be left in orphanages for months and mothers have the chance to come back for them, Kirk said. After six months or so, the child is placed for adoption. Often, babies put up for adoption are diagnosed with a medical condition that needs treatment. They were told that Flynn had possibly experienced a head injury during birth, but that proved untrue.

The only thing she had was strabismus, or crossed eyes, which was corrected with surgery and eyeglasses.

“Otherwise, she’s perfect,” Kirk said.

In April the next year, the Dupuies returned to Russia—and came home with their daughter three weeks later. She was 9 months, 9 days old when she was adopted on April 9, 2004— Good Friday.

Kirk calls that day “Great Friday.”

“When we were in (Russia) and on the plane coming home, we were just ready to start living!” Angela said. “(We had) no concerns because we were ready for it.”

They were so thankful to be able to provide Flynn with a loving home and to have her as a daughter.



Think Adoption, Not Abortion participated in the 2020 Saginaw March for Life.



Kirk Dupuie, organizer of the “Knights on Bikes” charity motorcycle ride, presents Bishop Robert Gruss with his riding vest, updated with Saginaw Diocese patches.

“I can’t imagine loving a biological child as much as I love her,” Kirk said. “When she was little, I would ask her ‘how did you get so precious?’ and she would say, ‘because you adopted me!’”

Since they brought Flynn to Michigan as an infant, living in the United States is all she can remember. Still, she recognizes that her life is a precious gift—one that she may not have received under different circumstances.

“It makes me feel really good ... I was brought into a good family,” Flynn said.

The teenager is involved in the pro-life movement, participating in the March for Life and other events. She is also working to encourage Michiganders to vote “NO” on Proposal 3 in the Nov. 8 election, which would enshrine abortion access in the state constitution.

“I just (want to) make sure people think (about) adoption and not wanting to abort their baby,” Flynn said. “(My goal is to) get them to vote ‘NO.’”

■ “WE’RE SO LUCKY”

With his family’s own adoption experience in mind, Kirk has been on a mission to make a change and raise awareness about adoption. They’ve

also received support from Father Bob Byrne, who served as pastor of Holy Family Parish in Frankenmuth before his retirement.

An avid motorcyclist, Kirk is the District Grand Knight for Knights on Bikes in the Diocese of Saginaw. He’s also the founder of Think Adoption, Not Abortion, an organization that seeks to raise awareness and encourage expecting parents to consider adoption. With the support of Bishop Robert Gruss, Kirk and Flynn organized a “Knights on Bikes” charitable motorcycle ride to raise money for Think Adoption, Not Abortion on Aug. 13.

“My goal is to have a couple of billboards up on I-75 for my website ThinkAdoptionNow.org,” he said. Kirk has posted the story of Flynn’s adoption and the number of babies lost to abortion. He has purchased a few billboards along the busy interstate, and he is raising funds to buy more. Billboards cost about \$1,800 for four weeks.

He said it hasn’t been easy to get the word out. The mantra of pro-abortion advocates is that it’s all about the woman’s rights, but he wants to ask – what about the baby?

“They call us names when we say things like ‘what about adoption and not abortion?’” Kirk said.

Knights on Bikes riders attended a morning Mass with Bishop Robert Gruss at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw before heading out on an all-day ride. Their route started in Saginaw, taking them through the Thumb to Bad Axe, Bay City and Mount Pleasant before ending in Chesaning. About 20 people started the ride on 15 motorcycles. Bishop Gruss joined the group on their ride.

“We didn’t make a lot of money, but we raised some awareness and we had a good ride,” Kirk said, adding that the group uses their motorcycles to evangelize.

The ride wouldn’t have been complete without the girl whose adoption inspired the movement. Flynn has been Kirk’s riding buddy since she was in kindergarten. He picked his daughter up from school on his Gold Wing, and she’s been riding with him ever since.

“People say, ‘she’s so lucky she has you,’” Kirk remarked. “And I say, ‘No, we’re so lucky we have her!’ It’s all in perspective.”✝

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON KNIGHTS ON BIKES, VISIT WWW.MIKONB.COM.
TO SUPPORT THINK ADOPTION, NOT ABORTION, GO TO THINKADOPTIONNOW.ORG.

Finding forgiveness in Rachel's Vineyard

STORY AND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DANIELLE MCGREW
TENBUSCH

COUPLE FINDS HEALING IN POST-ABORTIVE MINISTRY

Editor's note: This story contains descriptions of abortion and its effects. Some details have been omitted to protect the family's privacy.



Anne wears a ring with three diamonds, signifying her living children, and two sapphires, signifying one child lost to abortion and one lost to miscarriage.

It's been 41 years, and Anne still remembers the sound of the vacuum aspiration machine in the abortion clinic.

She begins to weep as she recounts the details of her experience—The silent drive to the clinic. Being taken away from her boyfriend, Dave, in the waiting room as she began to cry. Being given Valium to semi-sedate her.

Breaking down in tears on the exam table.

She remembers no one offering her the chance to change her mind.

“At that point, it was the darkest. I just felt like I had to turn my back on God and

my child,” she said through tears. She describes feeling paralyzed, helpless. “I just felt like I was in a black space, literally a black space. And I could feel ... everything that was going on. ... Then they go in with the machine ... that was the most difficult thing, just hearing that and thinking, ‘this is not right at all.’”

She was taken into a recovery room after the

procedure. A woman came over to reassure her, saying that Anne, who was 20, could have other children and things will move on.

“You’ll get over this. You’ll be okay,” the woman told Anne.

“But you know what?” Anne said. “It took me 22 years.”

Then, finally, the infinite love and mercy of God broke through the pain to heal Anne and Dave’s hearts.

“I just wanted to reverse the clock”

Anne and Dave met while attending Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant and began dating soon after. Almost a year later, in the fall of 1981, Anne realized that she was pregnant, despite being on birth control.

“I was thinking, ... ‘I don’t know how I’m going to handle this.’ I knew (Dave) cared about me, but yet, I had these feelings of ... insecurity and thinking, ‘if I tell him this, he’s just going to walk away,’” she said. “When I did confront him, of course he was panicked, too.”

Anne said she had hoped he would have said they’d get through this, but instead he offered to arrange and pay for an abortion.

“I was like, sitting there, like, in my mind thinking, ‘What am I going to do if I don’t follow through with this? He’s just going to leave me, and then I’m left alone with the situation. And how am I going to get through college?’” she recalled, describing the anxiety building up as if she were going to explode. “I should have been my child’s voice. But at that moment, I was not my child’s voice. I just stood there and listened to everything he had to say.”

Anne, like many women facing unplanned pregnancies, was scared. She wondered how she could tell her parents. At the time, she believed it would have disgraced them and fractured their relationship, but as she got older she

realized they would have helped her. She was also afraid Dave would leave her.

Dave, who married Anne after college, wouldn’t have left.

“That was my huge regret, leading up to this point, that — A, I didn’t explore things as well as I should have and B, I never told her that if you feel differently about this ... I would still be here for you,” he said. “I just wanted to reverse the clock and go back.”

Anne estimates she was nine to 12 weeks pregnant when they drove to Lansing to get the abortion.

“When I left the clinic, I felt totally regretful—totally regretful,” Anne said.

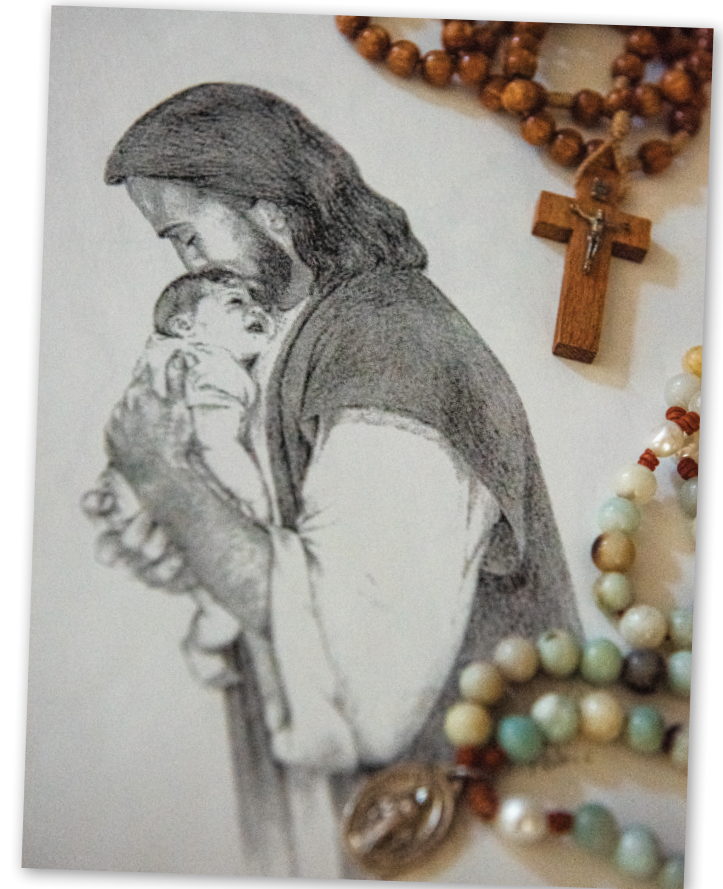
Both she and Dave were silent the entire drive home.

Enduring pain

“Through the next months and years—like the rest of our college career—like the kind of rededicated our lives in a more Christian direction. We got involved with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship ... We started taking our faith more seriously. We became small group Bible study leaders,” Dave said. “And yet, we had this, this past thing.”

The two continued to deepen their faith and intentionally committed themselves to celibacy for a time before they got married in 1985.

When they returned to the Diocese of Saginaw a few years later, they focused on their Catholic faith. They got involved in their local parish,



mentoring for marriage preparation and the pro-life movement.

But, as Dave says, “we never dealt with the issue at hand.”

That need for healing became apparent when Dave and Anne attended a Right to Life dinner.

“Talk about a trigger point,” Anne said. “The speaker was clearly identifying everything, and it all just came down on me like a pile of bricks again. ... I could not stop crying.”

At that moment, Dave realized how deeply the trauma of abortion continued to impact his wife.

“I put myself in a state of denial for periods of time, but that denial just created anger and hate and resentment, especially towards Dave,” Anne said. “It’s very hard for

a woman to forgive herself.”

A nudge towards healing came from a Catholic radio station. Dave heard Beth Bauer (who now serves as the coordinator of marriage and family life ministry for the Diocese of Saginaw) was discussing an upcoming Rachel’s Vineyard retreat in Gaylord.

“She was just talking about post-abortion trauma and how these retreats help to bring people together and help them to understand the pain that they suffered, that they’re not alone,” he said.

The interview explained that the retreat was helpful, healing and rooted in Scripture.

“I listened to this and I thought, ‘Oh God, we probably have to do this. I don’t want to do this, but I know you’re pushing me to do this,’” Dave recalled.

“I knew that my child literally said, ‘I forgive you. I love you. And I’m waiting to see you again. That was the most beautiful part.’” - Anne



While they weren't sure they could do the retreat, both because they had young children at the time and it was a painful subject, Dave called Beth.

“She said, ‘This is something you really need to do, because ... (God) is going to help you and your wife heal through this moment and heal your past,’” he said.

Forgiveness and healing

Dave and Anne agree that walking into the retreat was the “hardest steps, but the best steps ever.”

Like all Rachel's Vineyard retreats, that weekend lasted from Friday evening to Sunday and included prayer, meditation, letter-writing, talking and sharing.

“So many of us had not told our story to anybody,” Dave said. “You're just unleashing all this stuff; it's all pent up.”

During the retreat, the facilitators guide participants through prayerful

meditations of Gospel passages, such as Jesus with the woman caught in adultery or the woman reaching out to touch Jesus' cloak.

Dave described how he struggled with feeling he didn't deserve to be associated with their lost child. At the retreat, he heard the truth.

“God forgives you. ... Not only that, but now you can associate with your child and you can communicate with your child and you can give your child a name,” he said. “(God) wants people not to be broken and (to be) forgiven.”

Dave had brought a photo of the couple's three daughters sitting together, and he was looking at it as he wrote a letter to his child. He noticed that there was an empty space in the photo near the girls.

“I was picturing our son,” Dave said, choking with emotion, “with his arm around their back. ... He's there spiritually with them. One day, they will be all together.”

The retreat also includes

a memorial ceremony. For each child lost, the parent or parents light a candle and place it in a bowl of water, signifying baptism, and give their child a name.

Dave and Anne named their baby Michael Vincent.

“A work of the Holy Spirit”

Although Anne had confessed the sin of abortion many times, she never forgave herself. Rachel's Vineyard, she said, helped her come to terms with what happened and forgive herself. A meditation on what their child might say to her was particularly impactful.

“It's so intense and so amazing. ... I knew that my child literally said, ‘I forgive you. I love you. And I'm waiting to see you again,’” she said. “That was the most beautiful part.”

“It was at that very moment of realizing that when they said that my child forgave me, I knew that I had to truly forgive myself.

Because I felt that God's grace and forgiveness was shown through that meditation of my child forgiving me and allowing myself to come to terms with and not hold the guilt and shame of what I did anymore,” she continued. “(I thought,) ‘I forgive myself. Now it's time to step forward and do what God wants of me, I have to help others to not make this decision anymore.’”

Dave and Anne were so deeply impacted by the healing they received at Rachel's Vineyard that they became facilitators themselves.

“You don't walk out of there healed, but you walk out of there knowing you're forgiven,” Anne said.

While Rachel's Vineyard is associated with the Catholic Church, its retreats are nondenominational.

“It's like going through the crucifixion to the burial and the resurrection. It's a work of the Holy Spirit, how everything unfolds,” Anne said. “It truly is challenging, but yet, you take it in steps, and then, you meet Christ along the way.” †

RACHEL'S VINEYARD RETREATS OFFER HEALING AFTER AN ABORTION

DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH

It's never too late for healing from the wound of an abortion, and it's never too late to seek forgiveness.



Rachel's Vineyard is a global ministry that facilitates emotional and spiritual healing after an abortion through Scripture-based retreat weekends.

"The support team ... is specifically trained for this ministry," said Lori Becker, coordinator of diocesan outreach. "It's a ministry of walking with and leading (participants) to forgiveness, helping them to accept that they deserve forgiveness, that they deserve to forgive themselves."

The weekend is a very specific process designed to help participants experience the mercy and compassion of God. It is also an opportunity to surface and release repressed feelings of anger, shame, guilt and grief.

"It's just an incredible blessing to watch someone make that transition and know that they will receive some healing," Lori said.

Often, when a person or couple contacts Lori, they are afraid and apprehensive about the retreat, yet feel drawn to it. All her communications with a person participating in Rachel's Vineyard are strictly confidential, and the entire retreat is private.

As the weekend retreat progresses, participants come to realize they are in a safe and sacred environment, surrounded by gentle

and respectful support.

"Their barriers break down, and they do finally realize that God has forgiven them," Lori said. "Sometimes it's more difficult for them to forgive themselves than to accept God's forgiveness, so we work on that as well. It's a profound experience for them to be able to finally let it go and be free of that chain."

In addition to Lori, who previously served as the Diocese's respect life coordinator, a social worker, a priest and a couple who experienced an abortion (see previous story) serve as facilitators for the weekend. The retreat includes time for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, as well as Scriptural meditations, letter-writing, a memorial ceremony and other therapeutic practices.

"It's vital to go through that grieving process, to let the feelings out, to let the stress out, to talk about it. Because if we keep all of those things inside and try to squash that pain, the more it's going to hurt, and the longer it's going to hurt," Lori said.

As a sign of the prayerful support of the Catholic community, a knitting group from Holy Spirit Parish, Shields, donated hand-made prayer shawls for Rachel's Vineyard participants. These shawls are a reminder that

“I would now like to say a special word to women who have had an abortion.

The Church is aware of the many factors that may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly, what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope.

Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of Mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will come to understand that nothing is definitively lost and you will also be able to ask forgiveness from your child, who is now living in the Lord.

With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life.”

- POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II IN THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

those receiving them are covered in prayer.

If she could talk to a person considering a Rachel's Vineyard retreat, Lori said she would ask them to "take a step in faith." Reaching out takes courage, she said, but once someone does, their life changes. †

RACHEL'S VINEYARD POST-ABORTION HEALING RETREAT

Friday, Nov. 18 – Sunday, Nov. 20
Confidential Location in Saginaw

\$150 (Scholarships are available. No one is turned away.)

To register, call Lori Becker (confidential contact) at 989.797.6652 or email her at lbecker@diosag.org

For more information visit saginaw.org/healing-after-abortion-you-are-not-alone



Raphael, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

God's masterpiece

I'm no artist. I'm well below average even when it comes to stick figures, but I can appreciate a beautiful work of art like many others.

Great art has a way of raising up our hearts and minds to the contemplation of greater things. For this reason, churches often have beautiful stained glass, paintings, or statues that help raise the heart and mind to God. Pope Francis once referred to marriage as "God's masterpiece." It is the highpoint of his creative masterpiece at the dawn of the world, creating man and woman in his own image and seeing that it was "very good." In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the word for "good," kalos, could also be

translated as "beautiful." So, the Lord looked at the creation of man and woman and saw that it was "very beautiful." The Lord performs his first sign at the wedding feast of Cana, another way God is showing the masterpiece of the family. I love this image because it is a reminder that marriage is not something devoid of content, waiting to be defined by a state or by an individual as if it were a blank canvas, but that marriage signifies something. It is God's masterpiece. It is him putting something on canvas that is in his mind.

There is a plan for marriage from the foundation of the world. Marriage is the only one of the seven sacraments to preexist the coming of Christ in the flesh. Jesus then raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament when entered into by two baptized persons. John Paul II called it the "primordial sacrament," (TOB 96:1), meaning that it is God's sign in the world from the beginning of his plan for the world. It is an icon of the inner life of God, that God is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Marriage is also the sign expressing God's plan for the world to be in union with his people. This is the mystery of the union of Christ, the Bridegroom, and the Church, the Bride.

Do you think of your marriage as a masterpiece of God? Do you know God has a plan for your marriage? And that this plan is beautiful?

If many of us were to look over the shoulder of a painter taking his brush to canvas, we would not always know how each stroke makes sense. But the artist knows what he is creating.

Families experience many things that are hard to endure, that do not always make sense or seem clear. "Lord, why this illness? Why this trial? Why is this happening?" I'm sure many of you are asking questions like these to the Lord in the midst of your family life. The disciples thought something similar. How could the death of Jesus be part of the plan of God? How does this brush stroke make any sense at all? Men and women have a habit of taking the paint brush and ruining the painting of their lives through their sin, but the Father is so gifted that he can take the brush back and bring it all together. Jesus' Paschal Mystery, his death and Resurrection, is the master stroke of the Father. What came before and what would come afterward all make sense in light of this mystery.

Mother Teresa used to say she was a "pencil in the hands of Jesus." Allow yourself to be a paintbrush in the hands of Jesus. He can paint something beautiful in your family. Do you see your marriage as a masterpiece? What are the beautiful things God has done in your family and through your family? Has there ever been a brush stroke that did not make sense at the time, but afterward you realized how it fit into God's plan to bless you? Take these questions to Jesus in prayer and ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth about your marriage and family. See what God sees. †



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.



COURAGE OF *commitment*

Simply stated, members of a religious institute express the human life of Jesus Christ, who was poor, chaste, and obedient and who lived in community with the apostles. The spirituality of each religious institute highlights various aspects of Christ's life, such as preaching and teaching (Dominicans) and poverty (Franciscans). And, we members of religious institutes are to lead, in words and deeds, others to Christ and His Church, reminding people of their eternal call from and to God.

Often individuals have a sense of the importance of prayer in their lives, asking members of religious institutes to pray with and for them. When stopped recently with a request for prayer, I was impressed by the dedication of a couple toward their adult children. Reminded vaguely of a statement by Pope John Paul II, I was able to re-find the following: "...the person realizes himself most adequately in his obligations."

I understand this phrase to mean that each person better understands himself or herself and becomes the person God calls the person to be by fulfilling commitments. Obligations

are often chosen, such as marriage. Sometimes life drops an unexpected obligation into our laps, especially in times of family illness or crisis. Within our obligations, we discover our inner strength and generosity. Yet, we can also discover our own immaturity, selfishness, or small-mindedness. And we choose whether to overcome divisive and hurtful words or actions.

At any point, a person can excuse oneself or blame others: I spoke harshly because I was tired ... she was mean to me ... you just don't understand the pressure I am under ... my family has abandoned me ... and therefore, I cannot fulfill what is being asked of me.

In the marriage rite, a husband and wife confirm that they enter a sacramental marriage without coercion, freely and wholeheartedly. This is a commitment for the remainder of their lives. What courage there is in this covenant, based on faith and the grace of the sacrament! Pope John Paul II used the word *strive* to describe the values that the couple seek, such as unity in decision-making and mutual support, while making the self-corrections necessary to achieve these values. Human frailty continually interferes with our idealized view of ourselves. We learn the importance of turning to God in prayer for conversion of our own hearts as we strive toward our cherished values. And in the process of meeting obligations, we become closer and closer to the persons God has called us to be.

The courage of commitment has many faces: a couple starting their life together; parents learning the balance of allowing children to make mistakes and intervening in poor decisions; a woman bringing a child to birth.

Religious join with you in entrusting your fears, your aspirations, your inner yearning and your striving to God. †



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THE GHOST AND AQUINAS

Halloween is on the horizon, which means that images and costumes of ghosts are filling our television screens and streets. Even children’s cartoons join in with ghost-themed episodes at Halloween. When my youngest daughter saw one of these shows, I tried to assure her (in my best “dad voice”) that “ghosts aren’t real.” Now, though, I’m not so sure. Recently, I learned that one of our greatest theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas, expressed his belief in the reality of ghosts and reportedly had some personal encounters. Records indicate that Aquinas was visited by a Brother Romanus (whom he didn’t realize had died), and by his own deceased sister.

In his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas wrote: “It is absurd to say that the souls of the departed do not leave their abode.” “According to the disposition of divine providence,” he wrote, “separated souls sometimes come forth from their abode and appear to men. ...It is also credible that this may occur sometimes to the damned, and that for man’s instruction and intimidation they be permitted to appear to the living.” (Think of Marley in Charles Dicken’s “A Christmas Carol.”)

It’s important to remember that an opinion of a theologian is just that

– an opinion. There still has never been an official Church teaching on this question. Therefore, as Catholics we are left to form our own opinion unless the Magisterium (the Church’s teaching office composed of the pope and bishops in union with him) decides to clarify the matter. My sense is that we shouldn’t hold our breath.

I don’t believe I’ve ever seen a ghost. But I did have a strange encounter in 1992, soon after I arrived as a lay missionary in the former USSR. A group of us resided in a wing of an old Soviet university. One night, a fellow

missionary and I awakened with an uneasy feeling. We left the dorm room and tiptoed to the darkened kitchen area. Was there perhaps an intruder looking to rob us Americans? Suddenly, glasses and dishes began spontaneously breaking all around us. We immediately started praying and the disturbance stopped. My friend and I quickly concluded that some malevolent spirit was not happy that a group of us had arrived to spread the Good News in these former communist lands.

It is clear that some of Jesus’ followers did believe in ghosts, but somehow I never took their point of view very seriously: “When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. ‘It is a ghost,’ they said, and they cried out in fear. At once Jesus spoke to them, ‘Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid’” (Mt 14:26-27). Later, when the Lord had risen from the dead, their same fear resurfaced: “[Jesus] stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have’” (Lk 24:36-39).

The most famous account of a ghost in the Old Testament is when the witch of Endor seems to conjure the ghost of the prophet Samuel at Saul’s request; however, many Fathers of the Church considered this to be a diabolical manifestation – not truly Samuel’s ghost (see 1 Sm 28:5-20).

Peter Kreeft, a philosopher and author of many theological works, has offered his opinion that “the dead often do appear to the living. There is enormous evidence of ‘ghosts’ in all cultures.” “Ghosts appear on earth, but do not live on earth any longer,” he contends. “They are either in heaven, hell, or purgatory.”

This mention of purgatory brings to mind a family friend of ours. She is deeply devoted to praying for the souls in purgatory as they await their liberation into heaven. One night, her elderly grandmother (who lives in a



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separate home) fell – and was unable to get up. The next day, the grandmother told her how grateful she was that a man was there to help her rise off the floor. The grandmother said that when she turned around to thank this mysterious gentleman, he was no longer there. Our friend was convinced that one of the holy souls in purgatory had appeared to help her grandmother, perhaps in gratitude for all the prayers she had offered.

It's important to remember, though, that the Church strictly forbids us from trying to summon deceased persons or forecast the future through our own initiative. "All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings,

as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone" (Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 2116).

Peter Kreeft speculates that there are three categories of ghosts: "Sad, wispy" ghosts which are souls in purgatory hoping for our prayers and sacrifices; "malicious and deceptive spirits" that come from hell, often summoned through séances or the use of a Ouija board; and the "bright, happy" spirits of deceased friends or family members. Clearly, the best response to a ghostly encounter is prayer. If we sense the spirit is demonic, ask Jesus to drive it away. If from purgatory, pray for the soul to enter heaven. And if it is a benevolent visitor from heaven, thank God for this special grace.

As interesting as Kreeft's opinions may be, when it comes to "ghosts" Catholics are on surest ground in three specific instances. First, we can fully affirm that the apostles Peter, John and James truly

beheld the apparitions of two heavenly visitors at the Transfiguration of the Lord: Moses and Elijah (see Mt 17:1-8). Secondly, we are free to affirm the reality of Mary's appearances in approved apparitions such as Lourdes and Fatima, though we are not strictly required to do so. These are private revelations, so the Church leaves us free to believe or not believe. Finally, there is one "Ghost" we not only profess to believe in, but whom "with the Father and the Son" we adore and glorify – the Holy Ghost. ("Ghost" comes from the German "Gheist," meaning "spirit.") The third person of the Trinity is not a "ghost" in the colloquial sense, of course. He is a divine person, infinite, uncreated Spirit, God the Holy Spirit. And although "Spirit" is the word now commonly used in America, we can still hear the older term whenever we musically invite him to be our guest in the words of that beloved ancient hymn: "Come, Holy Ghost/Creator blest/ And in our hearts take up thy rest!"†

SPIRITUAL HEALTH 101

Interest in the occult is on the rise. The Catholic Church, however, teaches that "all practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service and have a supernatural power over others - even if this were for the sake of restoring their health - are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion..." (CCC no. 2117).

The Church cares deeply about the spiritual wellbeing of all people, and therefore warns against the following practices that can open a door to the activity of the evil one and other fallen angels:

- Ouija boards
- Séances
- Tarot cards, fortune telling or palm and horoscope readings
- Opening oneself to "energies" in certain Eastern spiritual practices
- New Age practices like channeling, using crystals, etc.
- Wicca
- Wearing magical charms
- Incantations, hexes, conjuring and casting spells, whether it be "white magic" or "black magic"

Note: It may be surprising to many people, but exorcists are reporting that when they have commanded demons to reveal how they entered the lives of possessed persons, some evil spirits have responded with works of fiction depicting witchcraft.

The Church recommends ways to spiritually protect ourselves and our families, including:

Baptism (I know of a young man who was suffering spiritual attacks and it all stopped once he was baptized)

Frequently receiving the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance (confession)

Prayer and eucharistic adoration outside of Mass

Having our homes blessed by a bishop, priest or deacon

Using sacramentals such as holy water or blessed salt or wearing a blessed medal

Having crucifixes and holy images in our homes (blessed, if possible)

Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Devotion to Mary, including praying the rosary, wearing a scapular, etc.

Invoking the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary

Invoking St. Joseph under his title "Terror of Demons"

Pope Leo XIII's prayer to St. Michael the Archangel



Sacred Heart Academy teacher Laurie Simon helps second grader Nathania Ikekhuah with a writing assignment. Photo by Danielle McGrew Tenbusch.

New enthusiasm for a new school year

BY ERIN LOOBY CARLSON

With the start of the 2022-23 academic year come many new things: freshly-sharpened pencils, nervous smiles as students walk into a new classroom, a renewed enthusiasm for our Catholic schools and a few new faces working to support religious education.

Since spring 2021, the Our Catholic Schools: Centered in Christ, Committed to Excellence initiative has focused on strengthening the 12 schools throughout the Diocese of Saginaw. (See FAITH Saginaw, Issue 2, 2022, pages 18-22 for more information about the committee and initiative.) The Our Catholic Schools strategic plan, published in May, is already being put into action.

“We are now engaged in the challenging and essential task of turning our words and prayers, with God’s support and guidance, into action,” said Cormac Lynn, superintendent of Catholic schools. “This strategic plan is the initial framework that will guide the work of the Office as Catholic Schools, as well as the Diocesan School Council.”

The creation of the Diocesan School

Council is one of several actions being taken through the initiative. The council, made up of volunteers, parents, teachers, principals and pastors from across the Diocese, is intended to be a working council that serves as a resource for all schools. The council members were formally trained by Catholic School Management, a consultant hired to assist with the process.

“I’m excited about the opportunity that we’re going to have a lot more people focused on Catholic education. Now we’re able to work on multiple facets to provide resources to schools,” said Deacon Gary Patelski, Diocesan School Council chairman. “It’s kind of a dream come true!”



Members of the Diocesan School Council and its related committees gathered for a two-day training session as part of the Our Catholic Schools initiative. Attendees included Deb Bierlein, Katy Pham, Krista Willertz, Theresa Hessling, Bishop Robert Gruss, Cormac Lynn, Lisa Seeley, Mary Beth Looby, Maureen Becker, Lee Ann Pullman, (back) Father Stephen Blaxton, Marty Schultz, Jim Jones, Bob Looby, Deacon Gary Patelski, Mark Bassett, Patrick Van Sumeren, Oscar Mendoza, Michael Cavanaugh and Dick Dolinski (advisor). Other council and committee members include: Father Andy Booms, Phil Kintzel, Melissa Michalski, Joan Ramm, Pete Shaheen, Danielle McGrew Tenbusch, Rodney Terwilliger, Renee Wood and Peg McEvoy. Photo by Danielle McGrew Tenbusch.

Importantly, the council is designed to provide resources to assist the schools, not hand out mandates. The council includes working subcommittees dedicated to addressing and supporting four key areas: Catholic identity and curriculum, people and governance, financial vitality and marketing and enrollment. These four pillars, identified in the Our Catholic Schools: Centered in Christ, Committed to Excellence strategic plan, help create a strong foundation for our Catholic schools.

“The strategic plan drives the school council,” Deacon Gary said. “Each of the subcommittees, including the executive committee, is charged with coming up with short-term items they can (take action on) in the next year.”

To enhance the efforts already being made, the Office of Catholic Schools has hired two new employees. Krista Willertz, who most recently served as the principal of All Saints Central Middle and High School (now All Saints Catholic) in Bay City, has filled the role of Catholic identity and curriculum coordinator.

In this position, Krista will help



Krista Willertz is the new Catholic identity and curriculum coordinator for the Office of Catholic Schools. Courtesy photo.



Danielle McGrew Tenbusch is the new marketing and admissions coordinator for the Office of Catholic Schools. Courtesy photo.

ensure that our Faith is appropriately, intentionally and effectively intertwined in the important learning and work that occurs every day in our schools. She will support principals and teachers in the development and implementation of best practices and appropriate resources related to instruction and learning, and also support school communities by providing opportunities for spiritual formation for students, staff, faculty and parents.

Danielle McGrew Tenbusch also joined the Office of Catholic Schools as the marketing and admissions coordinator. Previously, Danielle served as an award-winning writer, photographer and editor and has worked with FAITH Saginaw for many years. Danielle will work closely with building principals and appropriate stakeholders to coordinate and implement marketing, enrollment and communication plans to support Catholic school education. This will include assisting in the creation of school communication materials, as well as measuring and analyzing enrollment and retention patterns.

“If we work together with all our resources and fired-up people there's no doubt we're going to be successful,” Deacon Gary said.

Looking back at the 2021-22 academic year, Catholic schools in the diocese have seen great successes: 6.5 percent increase in total enrollment, \$3.6 million earned in scholarships and countless opportunities for evangelization. The 2022-23 year is sure to bring many more improvements and exciting challenges. †

James Cardinal Hickey Endowment Fund close to its \$1 million goal

BY JOAN RAMM

ENDOWMENT FUND WILL BENEFIT ST. BRIGID SCHOOL IN MIDLAND IN PERPETUITY



St. Brigid's Endowment Committee includes Maureen Becker, Deacon Al Oliver, Tom Erickson, Cathy Leikhim, Father Andy Booms, Laura Wilkowski, Steve Wilkowski and Tony Mitus. Not pictured are Todd Gambrell, Warren Mault, Cormac Lynn and Kristin Smith. Courtesy photo.

This is a story about a cardinal's commitment to his Catholic school in Midland and the support of the parishioners of St. Brigid of Kildare Parish to carry on his legacy as the school celebrates its 100th anniversary.

Members of St. Brigid's have raised more than \$900,000 for the James Cardinal Hickey Endowment Fund to make sure that St. Brigid School's operations are supported in perpetuity. The goal is \$1 million.

"The campaign is a perfect opportunity to acknowledge the legacy of Cardinal Hickey and do everything we can to preserve it for the future," said Father Andy Booms, pastor of St. Brigid. "Cardinal Hickey was always proud of his heritage growing up in Midland. His life is a great inspiration to never lose hope and faith in Jesus because Jesus Christ raises leaders in all times of the Church."

Cardinal Hickey attended grade school at St. Brigid, was ordained a priest in 1946 and later ordained the auxiliary

bishop of the Diocese of Saginaw in 1967. He then served as Bishop of Cleveland. He was elevated to Archbishop of Washington, D.C. in 1980, and then to Cardinal by Pope John Paul II in 1988. He died in 2004.

Cardinal Hickey himself established the endowment with \$50,000 seed money in 1991, and the fund grew to \$1 million. In 2010, school trustees decided to use the majority of that money to fund a \$3 million school expansion that added a middle school, gymnasium and kitchen and remodeled the original building.

"We had outgrown the grade school building and needed the expansion to keep the school vital," Father Andy

said. "Our goal now is to restore the endowment for the future."

The original endowment money was drawn down because the fund was managed privately and there were no restrictions. As of 2011, the endowment has been managed by the Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan (CCFMM) and only the interest is available on an annual basis.

The current campaign was launched with a sizable gift from the estate of parishioner and school alumnus Therese Nowak. Interest from the endowment will be used exclusively for the school.

Another goal is to have 400 contributors.

"We want this to be the work of everyone," Father Andy said.

Tom Erickson, co-chair of the Endowment Committee and Cardinal Hickey's nephew, said St. Brigid's future is important because it is the only Catholic school remaining in Midland County.

"More than ever, today we need Catholic values and Catholic schools," he said. "They produce strong future citizens."

Committee member Maureen Becker, who taught at St. Brigid for 18 years and was principal for 12 more, said the campaign is essential.

"As principal I had the experience of working with very small budgets," she said. "To know that there will be a dedicated amount for the school each year is huge."

Maureen is pleased with the campaign's progress considering the turbulent economy.

"I am seeing parishioners making sacrifices," she said. "I think people are becoming aware of how important this endowment is to the future of our Catholic school."

St. Brigid School has 150 students enrolled in kindergarten through eighth grade this year.

Father Andy is encouraged by the campaign.

"The endowment is a wonderful expression of trust and a way to sustain the life of our school which is a vital part of our parish mission," he said. "We are making a final push to complete the journey." †

Final campaign results will be reported in a future issue.

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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

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR JUBILIARIANS



Barb Geary congratulates Father Jack Johnson on 50 years of priestly ministry during a special Mass at the Cathedral. *Photo by Jeff Schrier.*



Congratulations to our priests celebrating jubilee years. They are: Father Joseph Friske II, celebrating 60 years; Father James Falsey and Father John (Jack) Johnson, 50 years; Father Richard Filary, Father Joseph Griffin and Father Thomas McNamara, celebrating 40 years; and Father Steven Gavit, 25 years. Bishop Robert Gruss celebrated a Mass in thanksgiving for their vocations on Aug. 1 at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw. *Photo by Jeff Schrier.*

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