

THE MAGAZINE
OF THE CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF
SAGINAW

Issue 4, 2021

faith *Saginaw*

IN THE KNOW

WITH FATHER JOE

How do we bring others
back to church?

FAITH MATTERS

Eucharistic miracles

GOD CALLED, THEY ANSWERED:

Get to know our new
permanent deacons



KEBERLEINS

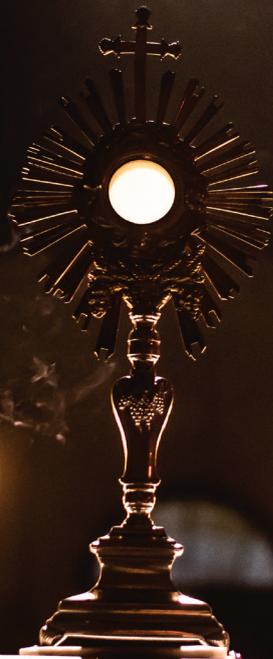
FIND

treasure

IN CATHOLIC

SCHOOLS

Plans are underway for a nationwide ***Eucharistic revival***



alesouzaphotos / iStock / Getty Images Plus

I recently heard a beautiful homily about keeping holy the Sabbath. It was about God’s desire for us to slow down, reorder our lives toward Him and, yes, rest.

In a world that values being busy and having everything fast (think fast food, fast internet, 2-day shipping), our Lord calls us to take time to rest in him. He understands the importance of setting aside one day out of seven for Him.

More and more often today, however, the Lord’s Day is treated like any other day of the week. Mass attendance, which has been declining for decades, has reached all-time lows in the wake of the pandemic. Yes, many have returned, but many thousands have not. (And, of course, there are many who long to be present and cannot for health reasons).

This is not something that affects only us here in the Diocese of Saginaw, but is of growing concern across our country.

Among the reasons which keep people from coming to Mass each week is a lack of understanding of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is for this reason that the U.S. bishops announced a national “Eucharistic Revival” to begin next year. The aim is to begin a fire, not a program, which seeks to “renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.”

In this issue of *FAITH Saginaw*, I encourage you to read Bishop Gruss’ column on the gift and grace of the Eucharist, learn about the Eucharistic Miracle of Lanciano in Faith Matters, and hear the inspiring personal testimonies of one of our priests and two of our parishioners regarding the Eucharist in their lives.

While planning is still underway, may we begin praying together for Eucharistic Revival here in our Diocese of Saginaw.

Come Holy Spirit! †



ERIN LOOBY CARLSON

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

FEATURES

9 KINDLING FOR THE FIRE

What are your retirement plans?

12 EXPERIENCE ANEW THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST

Personal reflections on the Eucharist

26 SPIRITUAL FITNESS

The miracle of the Transfiguration

Ethan Keberlein, 7, and C.J. Keberlein, 10, began attending St. Elizabeth Area Catholic School in Reese for an in-person learning opportunity last year. There, the family discovered a wonderful, faith-based educational community that kept them coming back.



Christ's real presence in the Eucharist is both *a gift and a grace*

In recent weeks, there has been much dialogue leading to serious debate regarding the practice of whether or not to administer Communion to pro-choice Catholic politicians. Many media outlets reported that the vote during the June Bishops' Assembly on the drafting of a teaching "Document on the Meaning of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church" was meant to be a justification to deny Communion to all Catholic politicians who are not aligned with Church teaching, especially when it comes to the abortion issue. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated that it was not up for debate to vote on banning politicians from receiving the Eucharist, nor was there going to be a national policy on withholding Communion from politicians, regardless of whether they hold public office or not.

The purpose of the teaching document comes from a major concern regarding declining Mass attendance, as well as the declining belief and understanding of the Eucharist among the Catholic faithful. A 2019 Pew poll reveals that only about 30 percent of U.S. Catholics believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Creating such a document also is part of the bishops' strategic plan

for 2021-2024 and will serve as a foundation for the multi-year Eucharistic Revival Project, a major national effort to reignite Eucharistic faith in our country.

We also know that less than 25 percent of Catholics in the United States—and even fewer in Europe—attend the celebration of the Eucharist on a regular basis. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an impact on Mass participation across the country. In the Diocese of Saginaw, the Mass count taken in May indicates that more than 9,000 people have not yet returned to Mass compared to pre-COVID times. One could ask, "What has gone wrong?" It is too complex of an issue to address here. Every family knows people who no longer regularly attend Mass or have fallen away from the Church altogether.

Encounter Love itself

Understanding the Eucharist leads to a personal encounter with Love itself. In the words of Archbishop Fulton Sheen: "The greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white Host."

"Once you understand the Eucharist, you can never leave the Church. Not because the Church won't let you, but because your heart won't let you."

These words by an unknown author reveal the heart of the great mystery we celebrate. The greatest event in human history flows from the depth of the Father's love for us in the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In giving away his Son, the Father's only and deepest desire is to have a relationship with those whom he has called his own – each and every one of us.

As the mystical Body of Christ, we gather to experience this reality in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist in our Catholic communities. Far from being merely an event we attend, it is here, in this sacramental moment, where each of us is drawn into this great mystery of love.

Because sin has entered into the world, humanity has fallen far from God's graces, keeping us from that original holiness and thus subjecting us to "eternal" death. Our Catholic faith proclaims "good news" and gives us an answer of hope that death does not have the last word. God's compassion toward us and His mercy are infinite. God has proved His love for us. While we were still sinners Christ was sent into the world by the Father to die for us (Rom 5:8). "How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath (Rom 5:9)."



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

Christ's sacrifice re-presented

Through his death on the Cross, Jesus presented to the Father in heaven his perfect homage and obedience as reparation for humanity's disobedience and sin. Jesus offered himself on the Cross for each of us, fulfilling his own words, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends (Jn 15:13)." Christ's complete act of charity towards humanity allows us the opportunity to re-establish an authentic relationship with the Lord and grow towards that original holiness.

This saving action of Jesus Christ is re-presented each time the Eucharist is celebrated. "It is Christ himself, the eternal priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priest, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice."¹

The Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is "the source and summit of the Christian life".² The Church draws her very life from the Eucharist. The other sacraments and all the works of the Church flow from and are directed toward this great mystery.

Mission of love and mercy

The Church's mission, our mission, flows from the mission of Christ: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21). From the Eucharist, the Church draws her spiritual power and then is sent on mission to "go therefore and make disciples" (Matt 28-19). The Eucharist comes to be "both the source and the summit of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit."³

Our union with Christ in the Eucharist, both a gift and grace, makes it possible for us to fully embrace his mission of love and mercy. When we come to understand this great mystery celebrated in the Eucharist and participate fully each time we gather, our lives will never be the same. We come to understand more deeply the Father's love for us in Christ Jesus. Our desire for spiritual union with the Lord deepens. Our own sacrificial love intensifies and expands. Our aspiration to serve the Lord grows. These are the very fruits of our Holy Communion.

Dear brothers and sisters, I have often thought of how the Lord Jesus desires to bring us, individually and communally, deeper into this

love relationship. When we deeply encounter Love, we are transformed by it, and become like the Lover.

Nourishment that transforms us

As shepherd of the Diocese of Saginaw, I long to help others come to know and experience Jesus in a more personal and life-changing way, especially through the celebration of the Sunday Mass. I invite those who have yet to return to the celebration of the Eucharist to do so— not for my sake, but for yours. Your eternal life depends upon it.

The Eucharist, the Church's greatest treasure, is to our spiritual life what food and water are for our physical life. If our spiritual life is not attended to, our faith can "become like smoldering cinders or embers – weakened by sin and secularism. It must be reawakened, fanned into flame. We must help Christians to encounter, once again, this Jesus, especially those who have left the Church."⁴

By giving the Eucharist the prominence it deserves in our lives, we will show that we are attentive to the importance of the greatness of this gift Jesus left us. The Holy Eucharist brings us into communion with him, enabling us to live with him in the life of the Trinity, and to not only be transformed by this love, but, with him, to transform the world through our lives made holy by this union.

We must remember that we are never alone, because through the humble signs of bread and wine, changed into his Body and Blood, Christ walks beside us as our food for the journey, strengthening us to become witnesses of love and hope for the world.

Let us not forget Mary, Mother of the Eucharist. We ask her to intercede for us and assist us in meeting her Son in the Eucharist. Every time we approach Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we turn to her who received the lifeless body of her son, and so received Christ's sacrifice for the whole Church. In her, the world is renewed in Christ's love. Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, pray for us. †

"I invite those who have yet to return to the celebration of the Eucharist to do so — not for my sake, but for yours. Your eternal life depends upon it."

1 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1410.

2 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

3 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6.

4 Archbishop Rino Fisichella, Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.

Q

Dear Father Joe,

I have friends who don't seem to be interested in returning to Church since the quarantine ended. **How do I convince them to come back?**

A

Your question reflects a heart of love, and I am so grateful for it. I think the best thing for me to do is walk you through a general idea or two and then some specific strategies.

In general, I am a big believer in offering your “why” to others. Why did you go back? Why is it important to you? What difference does it make in your life to go to church?



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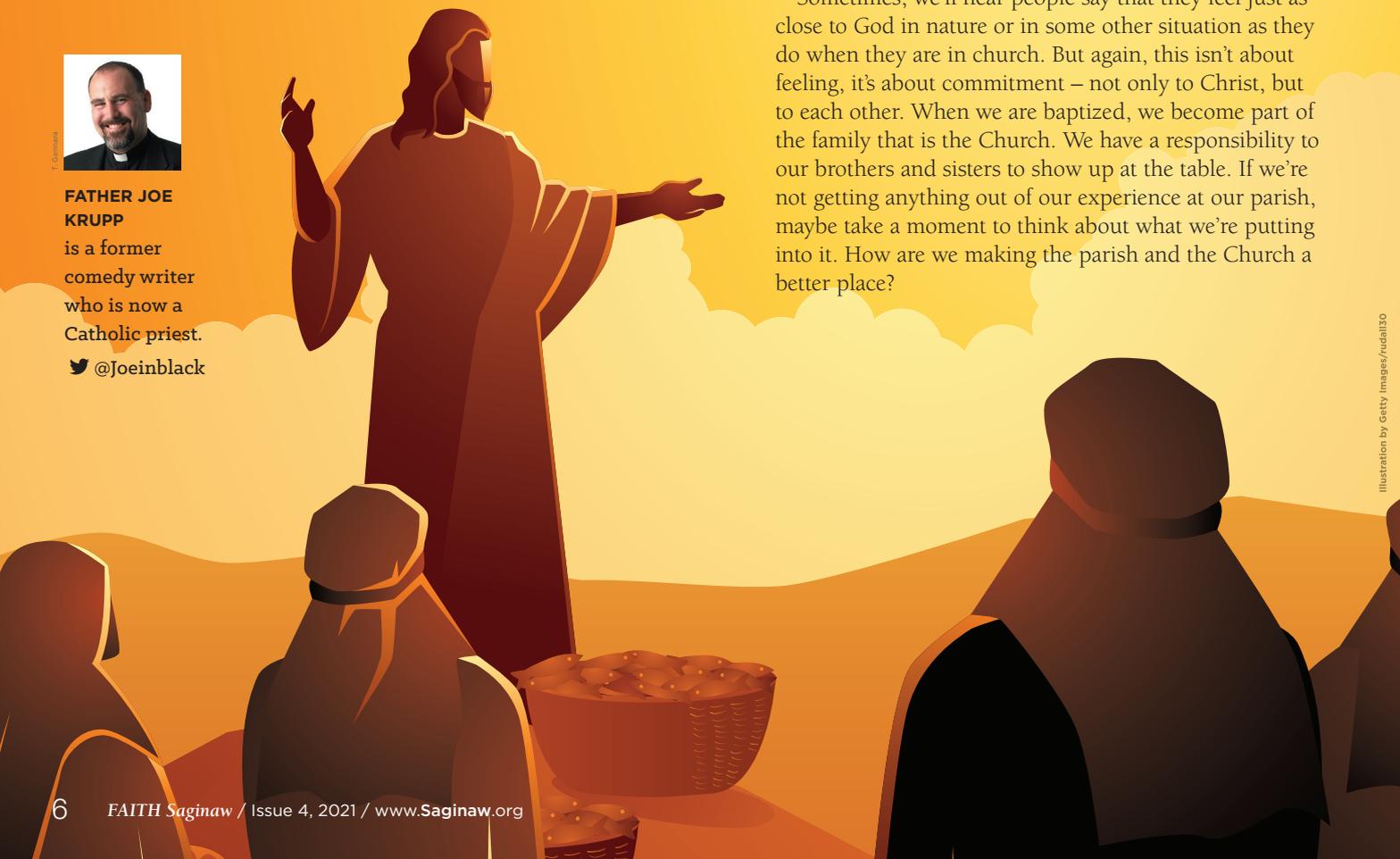
I learned this important lesson over time: A heartfelt explanation goes a long, long way.

I recall an interview on NPR with an atheist who was asked by the interviewer if he ever rethought his position in regard to God. He shared a fairly powerful story of how his dad sat him down one day and shared how his faith made him a better person. The atheist talked about all the theological and philosophical things that had been thrown at him and how, to that day, none of them moved him like his dad's simple, heartfelt explanation.

A second general principle would be a bit more blunt: Namely, when they were baptized or when their children were baptized, they made promises to God that they would follow through with this baptism by being “faithful members of his holy people.” There are three distinct times I can think of in the baptism ritual where Mom and Dad promise to practice the faith.

Parents are not asked if they'll practice the faith when it's convenient or when they feel like it, but rather, if they will make a commitment to doing so. Think of it this way – if you only show up for your spouse or friends when it's easy or when you're getting some benefit from it, then how long do you think those relationships will last? Jesus is always faithful, but we have to show up if we want to have a relationship with him. And we promised we would. There is nothing wrong with doing what we are called to do even when we don't feel like it or even want to: In fact, that is virtue. So, you gently remind them of their promises to God.

Sometimes, we'll hear people say that they feel just as close to God in nature or in some other situation as they do when they are in church. But again, this isn't about feeling, it's about commitment – not only to Christ, but to each other. When we are baptized, we become part of the family that is the Church. We have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters to show up at the table. If we're not getting anything out of our experience at our parish, maybe take a moment to think about what we're putting into it. How are we making the parish and the Church a better place?



The Spirit of God moves in our hearts

The most common situation I have experienced in regard to why people may not be returning has to do with some genuine failings of the Church, which I've discussed in previous columns. It appears that for a lot of people, this time away from the Church revealed something deeply, deeply sad: their life feels easier/better without their parish community because they were disappointed by their priest.

If this is the reason your friends stopped going to church, then prayer is the best answer. Don't defend indefensible behavior. Don't equate clergy with Christ. Instead, focus any discussion on hearing them, processing their pain with them and praying for them.

Should they ask for a defense of the Church, point to the ideal we strive for. We are called to be holy, and a broken Church cannot prevent that. Like you and me, the members of the Church are people who are capable of astounding holiness and shocking sin. In the same way that you are not your failures or sins, the Church is not her failures and sins. She is the bride of Christ. There is no perfect Church in this world because we are all sinners. We all have things to learn, and we all need to grow in holiness. Be merciful to your clergy. Be merciful to your friends and family who failed you. Be merciful to yourself.

Don't leave because of what people have done or not done; stay because of Christ. Grow in knowing him and imitating him. This is the answer God has given you and me for all the struggles around us: Be Christ. †

WE ARE DEPENDENT UPON GRACE FROM ABOVE. *Only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully.*¹

Reflect upon the many ways that you have changed over the years, as the Spirit of God fathoms or probes our hearts and teaches us the ways of God. Perhaps a temperamental teenager became a patient father; an absent-minded youth became a stickler for details; a college student who had nothing to do with the Church rushes to have her child baptized. We may not be aware of God working within us to intensify our humanity and our devotion to God. But, in retrospect, we can often see the work of God within.

A mystic of the Church, Julian of Norwich, wrote:

*"For it is God's will that we pray and he moves us to do so ... because prayer pleases God. Prayers make a praying man pleased with himself and makes the man serious and humble who before this was contending and striving against himself. Prayer unites the soul to God, for although the soul may always be like God in nature and substance, it is often unlike him in condition, through sin. Prayer makes the soul like God when the soul wills as God wills; then it is like God in condition, as it is in nature."*²

We are working against ourselves if we fail to pray. Prayer is not foreign to us; the Spirit resides within. Because prayer allows us into the mystery of God more fully, and into the mystery of ourselves, we at times fight against being vulnerable before God. The Catechism reminds us:

*The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live ... only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant.*³

Today I consider the blessing of vocations within our Diocese. Our first sacrament is the bedrock; in Baptism, we become sons and daughters of God. And throughout our lives, we have opportunities to strengthen the relationship in the sacramental life by participation in Holy Communion and Penance.

Through Confirmation, we receive an increased portion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, knowledge, right judgment, understanding, courage, piety and fear of the Lord. Confirmation provides a deepening and strengthening of the grace received at Baptism. In recent months in our Diocese, we have witnessed the ordination of permanent deacons, the ordination of a priest, sacramental marriages and religious profession. Each vocation is anchored in Baptism and expresses a deeper, fuller commitment to God and the salvation of others. We are nurtured in hope as we experience the deeper dive into relationships with the Lord.

May we grow in our gratitude to God for the richness of His grace. †



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¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2563.

² Julian of Norwich, Showings, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1978)158.

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church 2563.

What types of questions should I ask my child's teacher?

Parents are their child's primary educators, and teachers are important companions on this journey. As a child progresses through 12th grade, they may have had more than 40 different teachers. Each of these teachers will reach your child in a different way, and each of them will share your same mission: Help that child be the best they can be. Since parents and teachers are meant to be a team, interacting with great questions and conversation along the way will help accomplish that mission. As we work together to help God's children become what they are meant to be, here are some helpful ideas:



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- **Character trumps academics.** Great grades won't help kids get to heaven, but traits such as honesty, kindness, mercy and compassion will. Make sure to ask about how your child is interacting with others. Ask if they are a good and polite friend to others and if they demonstrate respect for authority. Those are things that matter deeply as they navigate their way through school and through life.
- **When discussing academic performance, ask the teacher if their work matches their ability.** Don't ask if they are the smartest or have the highest scores; the bigger questions are: How are they showing growth and improvement, and are the gains equal to the investment and God-given abilities? The goal is to help them achieve THEIR best, not THE best.
- **Ask what frustrates, encourages, excites and disappoints your child at school.** These questions are a great window to their emotional health in the school environment. Good teachers will ask you the same questions about them at home.
- **Little things can become big things, so ask questions and communicate early.** Your child needs to know their education is important and that you and their teacher are working together to help them do their best and be successful and happy at school.
- **The most important question of all is: "How can I help?" It should come from both the parent and the teacher.** Blaming and excuses aren't helpful. A willingness to find the positive, and work toward solutions, is what our students need most from us. †

What are your retirement plans?

Pope Francis declared the fourth Sunday in July to be the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. We celebrated the first one this year. This day was chosen because it is near the memorial of Saints Anne and Joachim (July 26), the parents of Mary and the grandparents of Jesus. Pope Francis often laments the “throwaway culture” in which those who are most vulnerable (the unborn, the poor, the elderly) are cast aside in the name of comfort, convenience and expediency.

In his letter celebrating this day, Pope Francis used the image of retirement, saying that God never retires but is always doing something new in our lives. Then he said, “There is no retirement age from the work of proclaiming the Gospel and handing down traditions to your grandchildren. You just need to set out and undertake something new.”

You always have something to offer. All are given five loaves and two fish by which the Lord can work miracles. Retired grandparents find they have more time to spend with the grandkids, forming memories and giving mom and dad well-deserved breaks. One loaf might be passing on wisdom from a lifelong marriage to a younger couple. Another, passing on the faith to children, whether in one’s family or in the parish. Another loaf is the daily prayer lifted up for one’s family and the Church. Even someone

confined to a hospital bed can unite that suffering to the Cross of Christ.

Sometimes the loaves we think are the most insignificant are the ones the Lord uses in bringing his blessing to the world. We always have something to give, because we can always give ourselves, which is what the Lord seeks anyway.

One of the hardest things about growing older can be a sense of loneliness. Perhaps children and grandchildren live far away. Perhaps loved ones have gone on to the Lord. Illness can lead to isolation as well. Nothing scares us more than being alone. Remember the promise of the Lord, “I am with you always.” This is a promise that should be kept close to the heart of the elderly.

Part of any retirement plan is greater rest. Being physically alone is not the same thing as being lonely. It is often an invitation from the Lord to find

our rest in him: “Come to me, you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Even if our light starts to dim, the Lord asks that we not put it under a bushel basket, but place it on a lampstand for all to see.

Choose hope always. Do not give in to wishing things were the way they were. They are the way they are. Do not fret over how things may or may not turn out. They will turn out as they turn out. Focus on choosing hope in the present, on filling the present moment to the brim with love. Nothing is more exhausting to our spirit than fretting about the future. Most of the things that cause us anxiety in life never happen. God is always doing something new.

Whether we are 1 or 100, we should accept each day as a gift from God. How is the Lord inviting you to make the Gospel part of your retirement plans? The Gospel is always worth it, and our true retirement home is out of this world! †

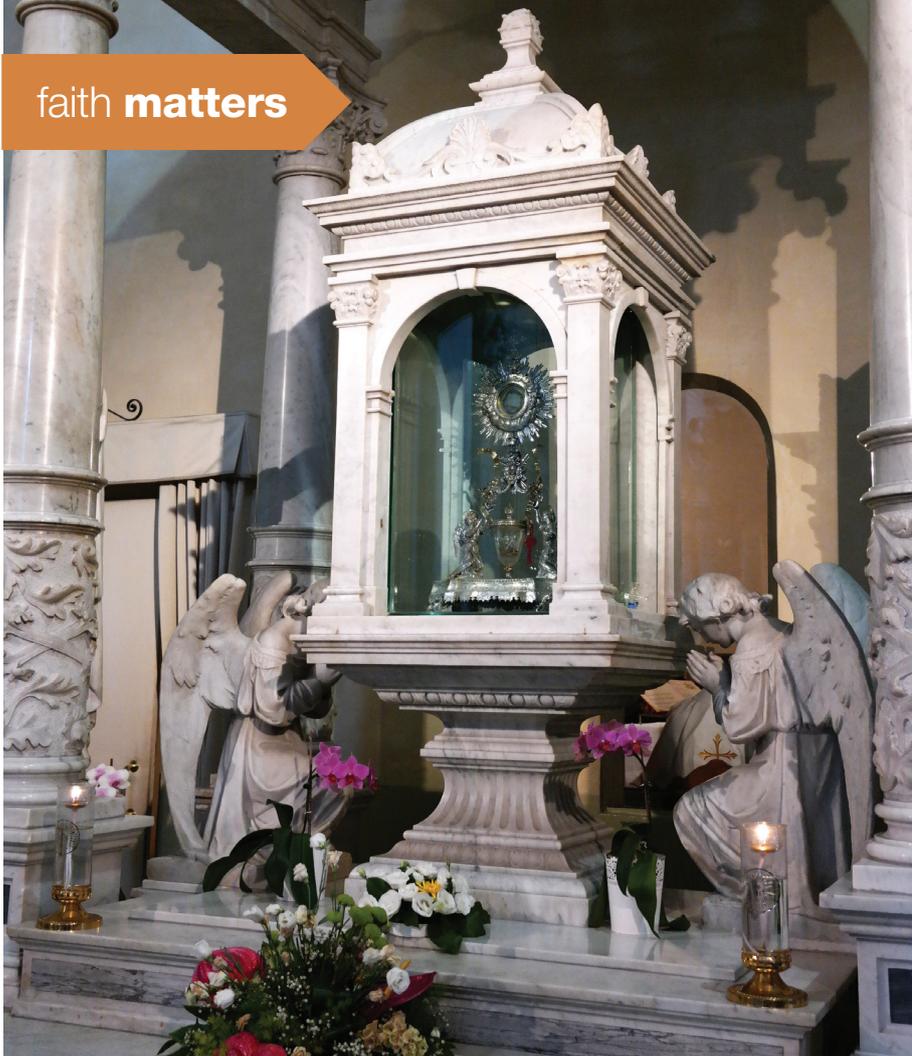


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the Sacred Host or the Lord's Precious Blood. Jesus is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity made man – the One through whom all things were made.

So what an ancient Byzantine hymn says about Mary bearing the Lord in her womb is also true of us right after Communion: at that moment, each of us is a “container of the uncontained God.” This is a powerful perspective to offer when someone says, “Mass is boring.” In truth, Mass is miraculous!

But isn't God always dwelling in a baptized person as long as she or he avoids grave sin and remains in friendship with God? Yes, absolutely. The Holy Trinity dwells in all the baptized as in a Temple as long as we remain in the state of grace. But the unique presence of the risen Christ – with his resurrected body, blood and human soul – only remains with us for a short time after Communion. Once that which appears to our eyes as bread breaks down within us, the eucharistic presence of Jesus is no longer with us. It is no wonder that there is always a sacred hush that comes over the congregation after Holy Communion. In these moments, the Lord who conquered death by death is truly within us!

‘Containers of the Uncontained God’

“**T**he more Eucharist we receive, the more we become like Jesus so that on this earth we will have the foretaste of Heaven.” - BLESSED CARLO ACUTIS (1991-2006)



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You return to your pew after receiving Holy Communion and close your eyes, thanking Jesus for coming to you in such an intimate way, humbly disguised as bread and wine. Suddenly, you open your eyes and behold a startling scene. Almost everyone in the Church has a red glass lamp hovering over them, with a candle flame flickering atop their heads. “What in heaven’s name can this mean?”

Such a mystical experience would

actually point to a profound truth. Namely, for a few sacred moments after we receive Communion, we are truly living tabernacles. (A tabernacle is the special receptacle where consecrated hosts are kept.) And just like the tabernacle in a Catholic church has a sanctuary lamp nearby to indicate Jesus’ real presence in the Blessed Sacrament, the same kind of lamp could rightly be placed near us when we receive

Science and the Eucharist

Our five senses – sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste – are great gifts from God. In general, we depend on our senses to lead us to the truth about reality – but they are not infallible. Bishop Robert Barron has pointed out how our experience of stars is similar to our experience of the Eucharist. Our sense of sight tells us that a particular star exists as we behold it sparkling in the night sky, but science explains that some of the stars we see do not actually exist anymore. Here, our senses betray

our perception of reality. Similarly, when a bishop or priest prays the words of consecration at Mass (“This is my body ... this is my blood,” etc.), our eyes still see bread and wine, and our taste buds still perceive bread and wine at Communion time. One of the greatest hymns to the Eucharist is the *Tantum ergo*, attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas. It begins: “Down in adoration falling / Lo! the sacred Host we hail.” But then we sing: “Faith for all defects supplying, / Where the feeble senses fail.” Our senses can let us down, sometimes, and this is the case when it comes to the Eucharist.

From the beginning, the Church has echoed Jesus’ insistence that the Eucharist is truly his most sacred Body and Blood, that “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink” (Jn 6:53-55). After Jesus spoke these words, many left because they found his teaching too difficult. If Jesus was only speaking symbolically, he would have been bound in justice and charity to call them back. Instead, he let them walk away. Fewer than 80 years after Jesus ascended into heaven, St. Ignatius (Bishop of Antioch and the first to call the Church “Catholic”) beautifully articulated our faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. He wrote: “I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for drink I desire his blood, which is love incorruptible” (*Letter to the Romans*).

Science and the Miracle of Lanciano

I’m a big fan of science. Yet, in some ways, modern empirical science has almost become a new religion. “Follow the science” easily usurps the first commandment’s call to follow

the Lord and worship him alone. We are still very much children of the Age of Enlightenment, summed up by a scene that took place after the French Revolution in 1789. To usher in a new age without religion, an actress or prostitute was dressed as the “Goddess of Reason” and placed on the altar of Notre Dame Cathedral to be the new object of adoration. Ever since, reason and science have taken a central place in the western world. That is why it is so powerful when science itself points to the truths of the Catholic faith. And this is the case with a Eucharistic miracle that took place in Lanciano, Italy around 750 A.D.

A monk there was celebrating Mass. Unfortunately, he struggled with doubts about what the Church teaches regarding Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist. He said the words of consecration, and when he uttered “This is my body,” the bread turned visibly into flesh. And when he prayed, “This is my blood,” the wine turned visibly into blood. Fifteen years ago, I visited this town and saw the flesh and blood with my own eyes. As Jeanette Williams notes in “The Amazing Science of Recent Eucharistic Miracles,” the “coagulated substance is human blood ... with the same protein distribution as found in normal, fresh blood. ... Like the blood, the flesh is also fresh, living tissue, because it ‘responded rapidly to all the clinical reactions distinctive of living beings.’” Science cannot explain how the flesh and blood still remain in their original, natural state after 12 centuries.

An article on the Aleteia website, “4 Incredible Eucharistic Miracles that Defy Scientific Explanation,” describes how “in 1970-71 and again in 1981, a scientific investigation was led by the scientist Odoardo Linoli, professor of anatomy and pathological histology and in chemistry and clinical microscopy.” The scientists concluded that “the flesh is cardiac tissue which

“For a few sacred moments after we receive Communion, we are truly living tabernacles.”

contains arterioles, veins and nerve fibers. The blood type (in unison with all other approved Eucharistic miracles) was discovered to be type AB.” According to Zenit, the “Higher Council of the World Health Organization appointed a scientific commission to verify the Italian doctor’s conclusions. The work was carried out over 15 months with a total of 500 examinations... [and confirmed] science’s inability to explain the phenomenon.”

With many Catholics struggling to believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the testimony of science about miracles like the one in Lanciano can be a great help to people’s faith. The computer wiz, Carlo Acutis – who was beatified in 2020 – saw the value of sharing these miracles. Before he died from leukemia at age 15, he created a website on this topic (including in English): www.miracolieucaaristici.org.

The finding that the miraculous flesh in Lanciano is cardiac tissue recalls the traditional Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And the AB blood type seems very significant – as my wife, LeAnne, pointed out to me. We might expect the blood type would be O negative, the universal giver. But AB is called “the universal recipient” which, in a sense, changes all blood types into itself. This connects closely with what happens at Holy Communion: Christ kindly makes us more like himself when we worthily receive him.

May Mother Mary help our faith in the Real Eucharistic Presence of Jesus grow, just as her son grew in her womb before his birth in Bethlehem, whose name means “House of Bread.” †



EXPERIENCE ANEW THE REAL PRESENCE *of* CHRIST

BY STACEY TRAPANI
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF SCHRIER

It has been said the Eucharist is the beating, living heart of the Church.¹ It is where life is nourished, refreshed and renewed.

Our lives are filled with encounters with God. We learn about Jesus through Scripture. We experience God's love in the daily rhythm of our prayer. We see the face of Christ in our loved ones and the hands of Christ in those who serve. We may feel God's presence particularly when in nature, serving others or when we hear a kind word.

But there is one place where he is uniquely and physically near: the Eucharist. This is where we celebrate and recognize Christ's true love for us and where the miracle of God's physical presence is available to us.

The Eucharist joins us together as one in community with God and each other. As we focus our hearts on the act of love that is the Eucharist, we open ourselves to a life intended by God . . . one that opens us to many wonders and signs. Remembering this gives the Eucharist an entirely new meaning, albeit one that has been recognized from ancient times. St. Augustine described the Eucharist: "O sacrament of devotion! O sign of unity! O bond of charity!"²

For many faithful Catholics, it was an unthinkable sacrifice to be unable to receive the Eucharist during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the relaxation of pandemic protocols, that sacrifice can now end for those who can return to the liturgy in person. Once again, we can participate in the "source and summit of Christian life."³

As a reminder of the power of the Eucharist, three members of the Diocese of Saginaw have shared their lived experience of Jesus through the Eucharist. The reflections on the following pages contain their stories. Each is an invitation to join your parish community in the sacred Mass where we encounter Jesus truly present in the sacrament that fills and refills us over and over again. †

¹ Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco of Genoa, Italian National Eucharistic Congress, 2016.

² St. Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium*, 26, 13.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1324.



‘We cannot separate the meal from the service.’

BY MARY
SHAUGHNESSY
BLESSED
SACRAMENT
PARISH,
MIDLAND

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”

1 CORINTHIANS 10:16-17

The greatest gift I have received is the Body and Blood of our Lord. Receiving my Lord in the Eucharist strengthens my soul to come closer to him and the strength to go out to be his hands and feet in my daily life.

I feel so awed at Mass to be in the presence of all who are receiving Jesus, knowing we are one in his body. This nourishment for the soul is shared not only with those participating in the Mass I am attending, but by all who partake throughout the world.

I remember hearing a homily years ago when the priest said, *“We rightfully focus on preparing to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, which is good, yet we should also be focused on who we become and what we are called to do after we receive Christ. We are called to go out and serve others as Christ did, to wash the feet of others, so that they may live a better life. We cannot separate the meal from the service.”*

EUCHARIST CALLS US TO SERVE

As a volunteer at the Toni and Trish House for the terminally ill, I have been called to serve those who are in the final days of their earthly lives as they transition to their eternal life. It is a ministry that I have been blessed to be called to for 13 years.

At the time of a person’s passing, I experience an overwhelming feeling of grace and a sense of sacredness, peace and love. It is an experience much like when the priest asks the Holy Spirit to come down upon the gifts of bread and wine, where heaven and earth are joined and the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. I am so grateful to believe and be nourished by Jesus so that I can experience His great love.

Through my ministry in the Christ Renewal program at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Midland, I have seen the power

of the Eucharist through the lives of countless women who are the hands and feet of Jesus by serving in food pantries and homeless shelters, teaching religious education or caring for others. These women offer a precious form of love and thanksgiving to our God when they serve others.

As an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, I have the honor to share our Lord with my brothers and sisters in Christ. As I place the body of Christ in their hands, I often wonder how they will serve our Lord this day. I see their hands, weathered and worn, and pray for them. As a minister of Holy Communion to the people in the hospital, it has been an honor to share the love of our healing God with patients and pray with them.

NOURISHMENT FOR THE SOUL

I have also learned how important it is to allow Christ to nourish us when we are most vulnerable and hurting. I cannot imagine my life without the gift of Eucharist. During the pandemic, it was a blessing to be able to share in spiritual Communion when watching Mass online with my husband. However, now that we can be in community, in person, in church with our sisters and brothers in Christ as we share in the Eucharistic feast, the gift is beyond compare! The feeling of being in community is a blessing to be treasured.

We, though many, do become one in the spirit of God to go out to love and serve the world as the hands and feet of God. Receiving the Eucharist nourishes us and becomes a way of life, devoting our lives to living and loving God in all that we do. We become empowered to be life-giving to all that we meet and serve. What a joy it is to be able to share in this Eucharistic feast each time we join together at Mass! †

MEDITATIONS *on the* EUCCHARIST



BY FATHER
CHRISTIAN TABARES
PASTOR, ST.
FRANCES X.
CABRINI PARISH,
VASSAR AND ST.
ELIZABETH OF
HUNGARY PARISH,
REESE

Father Christian Tabares, pastor of St. Frances X. Cabrini Parish in Vassar and St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish in Reese, reminds the Faithful that the Eucharist is necessary food for the soul.

“How many times do you eat every day, every week, every month, every year?”

I asked this of the children during their First Communion Mass in May. They responded: *“Three, five, 10 times. Many times. A lot. Too much.”*

Then I asked, *“What will happen if you don’t eat regularly?”* After thinking a little while, they said, *“We get hungry. We get sick. We starve. We die.”*

After this, I asked, *“Do you want to be weak, sick, starving or dead?”* They answered “no” without hesitation. They all wanted to be strong, to be healthy and to live.

This dialogue, along with the readings that we selected for the First Communion Masses (Proverbs 9:1-6, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 and Mark 14:12-16, 22-26), inspired these meditations on the Eucharist.

FOOD FOR STRENGTH. We need to eat to be strong, healthy and fully alive. Just as the body asks for food, the soul, too, craves nourishment to have fullness of life. Properly feeding our souls is as necessary as feeding our bodies. Otherwise, we risk starvation that leads to fragility, all sorts of illnesses and sin and eventually spiritual and physical death. Undoubtedly, to be fully alive we ought to be bodily and spiritually nourished.

FOOD TO SATISFY HUNGER. We need to eat regularly to satisfy our hunger and thirst. Often, we experience bodily hunger and thirst, then we have the urgency to look for food and drink. Likewise, our soul, mind and heart long for spiritual food and drink, so we have the same urgency to feed ourselves with the Word of eternal life, the bread of life and the cup of salvation. Our body loathes the feelings of hunger and thirst; so do our hearts, minds and souls—even when it does not seem as evident.

FOOD FOR HEALTH. We do not want to be sick, weak and tired. We yearn to be sound and healthy. We desire life in its richness now and forever. We fear physical, intellectual and emotional infirmities, pain or suffering and loss of life. The whole of our souls dreads temporal and eternal spiritual death. Whether we are wholly aware of this or not, whether we accept it or not, our entire being longs to have the abundant life Jesus himself promised.

FOOD FOR ABUNDANCE OF LIFE.

Meditation leads to one conclusion: we ought to nourish our body, soul, mind and heart regularly to experience abundance of life. The Eucharistic celebration provides us with that spiritual nourishment.

From the table of the Word, we are fed with God's wisdom to know better God's will, designs and timing. This spiritual food helps us contemplate ourselves, others, creation and God himself.

At the Eucharist, as in the upper room, we gather around the table with Jesus who takes the bread and gives it to us saying, "Take it; this is my body." Then he takes the cup and gives it to us to drink, saying, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many." (Mk 14:12-16, 22-26).

Nourished with the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus, we have strength to live our life, with all its blessings and difficulties. We come to experience greater faith in times of doubt, hope in times of challenges, love in times of loneliness, peace in times of turmoil and, above all, grace (God's life-giving indwelling) in times of temptation and sinfulness.

EXPERIENCING DEEP COMMUNION OF HEART AND MIND

Our participation in each celebration of the Mass brings about deeper communion of mind and heart with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Similarly, it brings about a greater communion of life and mission with family, friends, fellow believers and the whole world.

St. Paul speaks of this twofold communion in his first letter to the Corinthians: "As the body is one



though it has many parts, and all of the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (12:12.27).

We were created to be in an intimate communion with God, ourselves, one another and creation. The Eucharist gives us an unparalleled opportunity to celebrate together our call to be one, offering us a unique time to share with our triune God and each other our blessings and needs, our gifts and deficiencies, our accomplishments and failures and so on.

The table of God's wisdom, body, blood, soul and divinity is spread and ready for us. Let us not hesitate to come to God's table as many times as possible, so we may have an experience of that divine and human communion which enables us to enjoy the fullness of life on earth as it is in heaven. †

Father Christian Tabares, pastor of St. Frances X. Cabrini Parish in Vassar and St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish in Reese, offers the Sacrifice of the Mass daily.



Krystal Gipson of Midland prays at the Adoration Chapel in Bay City with her children Bennett, 11, Bella, 7 and Luke, 7.

‘Our hearts are restless until they rest in you’

BY KRystal GIPSON
ST. BRIGID OF
KILDARE PARISH,
MIDLAND

This time last year— on my birthday, in fact— we were finally able to return to Mass after three long months due to quarantine. While it looked different with social distancing and masks, we were so incredibly grateful to go back to church, celebrate the liturgy in person and, most of all, receive Jesus in the Eucharist once again.

As a family, attending Mass has always been important to us; yet it was evident we took this gift for granted. What a deep sorrow and ache we felt during this period of isolation. We saw how separation from the Church and Jesus led to more anxiety, a dulling of perspective and how we dealt with life’s challenges. The grace we receive in the sacraments helps us turn

back to him. We feel and see this every time we go to Mass, confession or adoration. We feel the real presence come into our lives as we experience more fully God’s abundant love. We need this— each sacramental encounter is like a breath of fresh air; without them, we remain more on edge, anxious and off-alignment with our eternal goal.

When the pandemic hit, life slowed down, giving us a chance to spend more time together and prioritize what is most important. We found it increasingly hard to keep perspective of truth and God’s will without being as close to Jesus and the sacraments. Our hearts were restless without that physical communion. Mass and the sacraments reorient us to what is most important, help us remain focused on our goal of going to heaven and help us see God’s truth and will more clearly.

In that restlessness, there was a fire kindling in our hearts to return to Mass, the sacraments and our community. When we returned, tears

Adoration Chapel

While many parishes offer eucharistic adoration on a regular basis, All Saints Parish in Bay City hosts an adoration chapel open 24/7 for anyone to pray before the Blessed Sacrament.

St. James Church, All Saints Parish
710 Columbus Ave., Bay City
Entrance at Columbus and Monroe

The Blessed Sacrament will not be exposed during Mass times and during funeral visitations.

Learn more at saginaw.org/adoration-chapel-relocation-everyone-invited

streamed down my cheeks to be where Jesus is truly present and we're able to pray the liturgy and receive him: body, blood, soul and divinity. We were thankful for online Mass during the quarantine, but there was no substitute for celebrating Mass in person and receiving Jesus in Holy Communion.

ENCOUNTERING JESUS THROUGH ADORATION

It wasn't always this way.

My love for the Catholic faith and the Eucharist grew later in my adult life. I was raised in a Catholic family, gifted with early sacraments, but we fell away from the faith as we moved to a new town away from faithful grandparents. I jokingly say that as a child, we became "Chreasters," attending Mass only on Christmas and Easter. My faith continued to grow in college with Protestant friends through Bible studies, prayer groups and worship services.

I returned to the Church after meeting my future husband, Pat, who was deeply rooted in his Catholic faith. We had just moved back to Midland with two young boys under three and were soon expecting our third child. Life was busy and quite noisy.

The first time I went to eucharistic exposition, it was quiet and peaceful as I knelt down and just brought my "little" love and the joy and needs of my life to him. This was the turning point in my faith life when I encountered Jesus in a new way.

Eucharistic exposition, or adoration, is a time to be present with Jesus in the Eucharist and actively listen to him through prayer, Scripture or reading spiritual books. Similar to spending time with loved ones, eucharistic exposition is a powerful way to deepen our relationship with the Lord.

I encountered his love in such a powerful way that I felt his delight and deep love for me exactly where I was. To think— as big, powerful and true as our creator is, that he would become small and present to us today so that we can draw near and receive him!

In return, I had such a desire to love and surrender to his will— though admittedly I'm not strong enough to do that always, so I return again and again for his wisdom and grace. Through this encounter, I became drawn to attend Mass and eucharistic adoration more frequently.

The kids and I now attend daily Mass, and Pat and I make Holy Hours each week. When our kids were young, Pat and I found ways to ensure we both had quiet time for eucharistic adoration, and over time kids have joined us for longer periods. While the daily challenges come and go, the day always goes smoother when we begin with the right priorities.

RESTING IN JESUS

To know Jesus, we must spend time with him.

Eucharistic adoration is a peaceful, quiet time away from divisions of this world in awe of the physical presence of Jesus. These times of adoration, especially early in the morning when our minds are quiet, have been when we have experienced the most touching times of hearing God.

Still, there is no better way to be with him than receiving him and worshipping at Mass. Our family has been inspired to see how important celebrating Mass is for others as we witness elderly and wheelchair-bound come to the outdoor Mass where they feel safe. We see the joy on their faces, even in harsh conditions.

As St. Augustine said, "*You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.*" †

The Gipson family includes (front row) Sam, 9; Dominic, 3; Patrick; Krystal; Charles, 13; (back row) Luke, 7; Bella, 7; John, 5 and Bennet, 11.





KEBERLEINS

FIND *Treasure*

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH

IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

What the Keberleins were looking for was an in-person schooling option for their sons, C.J. and Ethan. What they found was so much more. “Prior to us sending our kids (to Catholic school), I’d say take it or leave it,” said John Keberlein of Blessed Trinity Parish in Frankenmuth. “Now I’d strongly encourage someone because of the curriculum, because of the discipline and because of the spiritual teachings. It has far surpassed my expectations.”

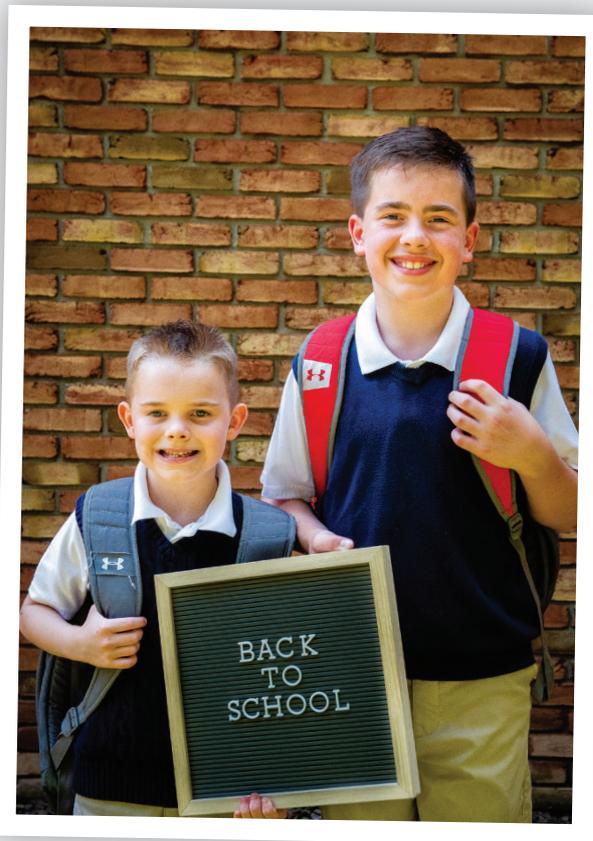
John and Lisa, like so many families, found themselves thrust into the unknown in March 2020.

“The global pandemic hit, and we were trying to (do virtual school-at-home) and working full-time,” Lisa recalled.

C.J. was in third grade and Ethan was in kindergarten. The Keberleins’ middle son, Dustin, has special needs; an applied behavior analysis therapist currently works with him in the family’s home. Adding in virtual school and a pandemic ... it was all simply too much. They decided to explore private school options.

“We left a message with a small Lutheran school; we didn’t even know about St. Elizabeth,”

Lisa said. When they learned of the Catholic school in Reese through a friend, they called. “We talked to Gabbie (Marguery), who was absolutely wonderful. She was so welcoming that we felt comfortable going there.”



St. Elizabeth Area Catholic School— like all 12 schools in the Diocese of Saginaw— followed the diocese’s Back to School Task Force COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan, which included protocols for rigorous cleaning, screening and social distancing.

“Many families came to us, or in some cases returned to us, because they wanted face-to-face instruction,” said Cormac Lynn, superintendent of the diocesan school system. “Every one of our schools, throughout the year, had the intent to have in-person instruction whenever it was safe to do so. We made that decision based on what we felt was best for the students, as well as an understanding that in-person learning is part of our evangelization mission.”

Most public schools, by contrast, made online learning a significant part of their curriculum during the pandemic. Cormac pointed out that Catholic schools do not have all the same responsibilities and challenges that public schools do, such as the need to provide transportation. Smaller class sizes also make it easier for Catholic schools to take necessary precautions, such as social distancing.

“It’s not a criticism of other schools that have gone remote. It’s just a choice that some families made,” he said.

The Keberleins’ choice allowed C.J. and Ethan to receive in-person

instruction throughout the year. “It was a really good decision for our family. We are truly blessed to have such a great experience,” Lisa said.

This year, the Keberleins are choosing to continue the boys’ Catholic education at St. Elizabeth not because of the pandemic, but because of their positive experience. The school’s principal, Gabbie Marguery, said they are two of 14 new students who came to St. Elizabeth last year. Most returned, though some moved to All Saints Central in Bay City, to be closer to their home.

“(Parents) liked what they saw, because they’re still here,” she said. “I think maybe they came because we were in-person, but they really enjoyed the school and who we are.”

Impressed by community and curriculum

“It’s a loving, Christian, caring environment. It’s like a family,” Lisa said.

That family-like feeling began from day one, she said. On C.J. and Ethan’s first day of school, their brother Dustin had surgery—and the school included him in their prayers.

“Automatically, we felt so welcome. We got merged into this community,” Lisa said. “You don’t feel like just a number. Everybody knows everybody.”

Gabbie firmly believes this is what makes St. Elizabeth special.

“The caring, nurturing environ-

ment that we can create is the most important thing to us, and it’s what stands out,” she said.

She recalled taking families on a school tour and seeing an older student notice a younger student’s shoelace was undone and leave to help tie the child’s shoe.

The close-knit community and small class size is a huge benefit to the Keberleins, who believe their sons get more one-on-one attention with about 10 to 12 students per grade.

“Just putting (Ethan) in St. Elizabeth, his teacher quickly identified his reading was accelerated. They were able to move him to the next grade level for reading and spelling,” Lisa said, adding that she didn’t think that would have happened in a larger school.

(Ethan himself said that recess is his favorite class.)

Both parents agree the curriculum is more advanced than it was at the boys’ original school.

“They’re getting a phenomenal education,” John said, specifically mentioning vocabulary, civics and math.

But most of all, they are getting an education that is distinctly Catholic.

A faithful foundation

The Catholic environment and the chance to instill Christian values was “for sure a No. 1 deciding factor” in choosing St. Elizabeth’s, Lisa said.

“(C.J. and Ethan) seem to be gaining a knowledge and understanding of what the Catholic religion is all about and why we do what we do,” said John, a lifelong Catholic. “They’re learning about the Rosary. They’re learning prayers. They go to Mass every week, so they’re learning about what goes on in Mass. Now they can actually participate and

“ I would say it’s made us stronger as a family unit. It’s definitely helped us grow closer together ... We’re talking about faith more and inserting God’s goodness everywhere. ” - LISA KEBERLEIN

understand what's going on.”

As the kids learn about the faith, so has Lisa, who converted to Catholicism when she and John married.

“That’s part of our mission: that ‘the staff and the community work together to provide a safe, supportive and nurturing Catholic environment. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are committed to Gospel values, discipleship, and academic excellence,’” Gabbie said.

The environment, steeped in the Catholic faith, includes everything from prayer time to religious images in the classroom to the way students act.

“(Families) really saw the difference,” she said. “The faith is what makes us really different.”

Both parents have noticed differences in the boys. C.J., whom John describes as “a compassionate kid,” has taken on more of a leadership personality. Ethan, eager to show off a loose tooth, said he would give his Tooth Fairy money to the poor. And discussing their faith is more common than ever.

“I’ve always talked about God with them, but they talk about it more— the presence of God and that he’s everywhere,” she said. “I would say it’s made us stronger as a family unit. It’s definitely helped us grow closer together. ... We’re talking about faith more and inserting God’s goodness everywhere. It is amazing to see the boys grow in their faith.”

John believes that the boys attending a Catholic school, immersed daily in the faith, will create a firm foundation and solid understanding at a young age.

“If you build a good foundation, the structure will last for years and years,” he said. †



C.J. and Ethan Keberlein will be entering fifth and second grades at St. Elizabeth Area Catholic School in Reese.

The Diocese of Saginaw has **12 schools**, including three high schools, in which we educate more than **2,000 students**.

Learn more at saginaw.org/our-schools

St. Mary, Alma: 989.463.4579, P-6

Auburn Area Catholic, Auburn: 989.662.6431, P-5

All Saints Central Middle and High, Bay City: 989.892.2533, 6-12

All Saints Central Elementary, Bay City: 989.892.4371, P-5

St. Joseph the Worker, Beal City: 989.644.3970, K-6

Our Lady of Lake Huron, Harbor Beach: 989.479.3427, P-8

St. Brigid of Kildare, Midland: 989.835.9481, K-8

Sacred Heart Academy-Elementary, Mount Pleasant: 989.773.9530, K-8

Sacred Heart Academy-Middle and High, Mount Pleasant: 989.772.1457, 7-12

St. Michael, Pinconning: 989.879.3063, K-8

St. Elizabeth Area, Reese: 989.868.4108, P-8

Nouvel Catholic Central Elementary and Middle, Saginaw: 989.399.2230, P-8

Nouvel Catholic Central High, Saginaw: 989.399.2230, 9-12

Deacon Alan Wright, Deacon Andrew Waligorski, Deacon Dale Sisson and Deacon Jacob Huysentruyt were ordained to the permanent diaconate after five years of formation.

God called, they responded

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIELLE MCGREW TENBUSCH

Get to know our new permanent deacons

feature

A permanent deacon has one foot in the secular world and the other in the sacred realm, summarizes Dr. Dan Osborn, who coordinates the permanent deacon formation program on behalf of Bishop Robert Gruss.

Four men, all of whom are married and have had secular professions, received the sacrament of Holy Orders on June 11 when Bishop Robert Gruss ordained them to the permanent diaconate. Jacob Huysentruyt, Dale Sisson, Andrew Waligorski and Alan Wright entered the threefold diaconal ministry of word, charity and worship.

As permanent deacons, they will be able to preside at baptisms, funerals and weddings outside of Mass, proclaim the Gospel at liturgies and carry out specific roles at Mass, among other functions.

"In short, a permanent deacon is meant to be a kind of bridge between the life of the Church and the daily lives of the people of God, since he personally lives both realities," Dr. Osborn said.

**Interviews have been edited for length and clarity.*



Deacon Jacob Huysentruyt

Holy Family Parish, Marlette/Peck/Sandusky

Spouse: Elizabeth

Children: Amelia, Madeline, Vivienne, Catherine, Leo and a baby due in December

Band director, Sandusky Junior/Senior High School

What drew you to the permanent diaconate?

After a period of deep growth in my faith and relationship with Jesus, I prayed, "Lord, please show me the way to serve you." Over the course of the next year, several things fell into place, and I found myself applying for the permanent diaconate in 2016. There were many small ways I said yes to the Lord during that year, and out of these moments big things happened. I never sought the permanent diaconate for myself; it was really a natural part of the Lord's pursuit of me.

How has the process of becoming a deacon deepened or enriched your faith?

The formation was both spiritual and catechetical. By going through the entire catechism one paragraph at a time, I learned just how well-developed the Church's teachings are. There were countless moments where I connected dots between various teachings and realized the enormous treasure we have as Catholics. Continued discernment throughout the formation years helped me to gain clarity about who I am, who the Lord is, and what to do about it.

What aspects of being a deacon are you most looking forward to?

I am most looking forward to availing myself to be God's instrument in any way I'm called. On the human side, I look forward to becoming more involved with peoples' lives and helping them however I can. I really enjoy working with people!



“If you had told me then that I would one day be a deacon, I would have probably rolled over laughing. But my dad never stopped praying for me ...”

DEACON ANDREW WALIGORSKI

Deacon Alan Wright, Deacon Jacob Huysentruyt, Deacon Dale Sisson and Deacon Andrew Waligorski were ordained by Bishop Robert Gruss, center, on June 11.



Deacon Dale Sisson

Christ the Good Shepherd, Saginaw; also serves at St. John Paul II Parish

Wife: Cindy

Children: Kyle and Nicole

Retired, also serves as an RCIA leader

What drew you to the permanent diaconate?

I truly was called by the Lord to continue my journey of faith and to go into the permanent deacon program. I felt the call four times before finally giving my answer of yes. At that point I felt a great sense of calm, and I knew it was the right thing to do.

How has the process of becoming a deacon deepened or enriched your faith?

Through the process, it is interesting how your taste in things changes—the music you listen to, the reading material you select to read and how you see and interact with people. It is definitely the stirrings of the Holy Spirit.

What was your favorite or most interesting part of the formation process?

One of the best parts of the program is the camaraderie you have with those in the program, whether your fellow candidates or the people assisting with the formation.

Do you have a particular devotion, prayer or Scripture passage that has helped you in your journey?

A scripture passage I came across early in the program is 1 Kings 19:4-7. Elijah was worn out and giving up. He woke to an angel providing him nourishment. He woke a second time and the angel was there again, providing more nourishment. The angel said, “Eat, lest you will not have the strength to go where the Lord is sending you.”

In my life, I felt the first nourishment was the lay ministry program. The second was the permanent diaconate formation program. I needed to have both of these to nourish my spiritual growth to go where the Lord is going to lead me.



(Left) Deacon Jacob Huysentruyt is vested by Father Stephen Blaxton of Holy Family Parish.



(Right) Bishop Robert Gruss ordains Dale Sisson to the permanent diaconate through the laying on of hands.



Those who are sensing a call from God to serve as a permanent deacon may call Dr. Dan Osborn by Oct. 1 at 989-797-6662 or email diaconate@dioceseofsaginaw.org.



Deacon Andrew Waligorski

Holy Family Parish, Marlette/Peck/Sandusky

Wife: Sarah

Children: Kiera, Adia, Balin, Callen, Clara and Declan

Pharmacy technician at McKenzie Memorial Hospital, Sandusky

How has the process of becoming a deacon deepened or enriched your faith?

It has taught me a lot about abandonment to God's will. There was a constant struggle with the question of whether or not I was actually following the path God wanted for me. The struggle over the possible strain it could place on Sarah and the kids also caused a lot of internal conflict for me. I learned I have to let go and just trust; God will do all the heavy lifting. The most important thing is to make ourselves available so he can use us.

What would you say to a married or single man who is intrigued by the vocation to the permanent diaconate?

Pray about it and continue to pray. You can never go wrong in following God's will. Talk with those you trust most and go to the informational meetings about the diaconate. Above all, just let God lead you. The Church needs us to say 'yes!' when God is calling.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

One thing I encounter so often is the pain people experience from loved ones who no longer practice or have left the faith. After confirmation, I left the faith and was gone for almost 20 years. If you had told me then that I would one day be a deacon, I would have probably rolled over laughing. But my dad never stopped praying for me and never stopped talking to me about the faith. This was instrumental in my re-conversion. God used my dad to help break my heart of stone.

So please, don't give up! Continue to pray for them and continue to have conversations with them. Learn the beauty of the faith so that you can talk to them and answer their questions about it. Share books or articles with them; there are so many resources available to us today. I was longing for God and didn't even realize it. They are, too.



Deacon Andrew Waligorski incenses the faithful during Mass.



Deacon Alan Wright

St. Michael Parish of Maple Grove

Wife: Beverly

Children and spouses: Theresa (Scott) Carnahan, Christina (Garrett) Newman and Edward (Stephanie) Wright

Grandchildren: 6

Retired, also serves as RCIA leader and Knights of Columbus grand knight

Do you have a particular devotion, prayer or Scripture passage that has helped you on your journey?

I believe it was being faithful to the Liturgy of the Hours' morning and evening prayer, along with the daily Scripture readings and the reflections on the Scripture passages that helped me on my journey. I often pray the Rosary and pray to St. Francis and Blessed Solanus Casey. My favorite scripture passage is Samuel 3:10; like Samuel, it took a few times to realize that God was calling me.

What would you say to a married or single man who is intrigued by the vocation to the permanent diaconate?

I would say to them: go spend time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. With an open heart and mind, in prayer ask God: "What do you ask of me? What do you want me to do? Is this path the one I am to take? Help me to follow you and do your will."

Is there anything else you like to add?

When I married my wife Bev 44 years ago, we invited God to be part of our marriage. At ordination, I felt like I was getting married again— this time to Christ. It was a day I longed for: to be with someone I loved forever, to give myself, heart and soul. Like my wedding day, I was making a commitment to a person I love and adore, a promise to be faithful no matter what. This time, the commitment was to Christ and our bishop. Marriage is a covenant in which we work for the greater good of one another and others. That is what we do with Christ. †



Deacon Alan Wright prays after being ordained as Bishop Robert Gruss lays hands on each candidate.

Seek out the good fruit

Permanent deacon reflects on eternity, just hours before death

“Seek out that good fruit with all your heart and do all you can to bring it forth, no matter the cost, and you will not only save your soul, you will also help feed others with the good fruit of Heaven.”

The words above were included in a reflection written by Deacon David Kasprzyk and shared on his social media page just hours before he died.

Deacon Kasprzyk, who was the youngest permanent deacon to be ordained for the Diocese of Saginaw at 34 years old in 1981, would have celebrated his 40th anniversary as a permanent deacon this past July. He ministered in the Diocese of Grand Rapids for the last 33 years. He died on June 23 following a car crash in Muskegon. He was 74 years old.

A friend and fellow deacon from the Diocese of Saginaw, Deacon Mike Arnold described him as a “great teacher.”

Deacon Kasprzyk regularly offered Scriptural reflections via his social media page. The morning before he died, he offered his thoughts on the Gospel reading for the day (Mt 7:15-20). Reflecting on eternity, he shared in part:

Look in the mirror this morning. What sort of tree do you see? Do you see a tree that bears good fruit? Unlike the trees of bark and leaves and branches, we can be

changed, we can become fruitful again if we have stopped, and it matters not how old this tree is. The fruit we bear might change, the way we express and manifest our fruit may change, but we can certainly be fruitful at all times until we are called to eternity.

Do you see clearly both the good and bad fruit around you? Is your life helping to foster the lies of the evil one or the truth and love of God? Look at the fruit your life bears, as well as the fruit within our world, in an objective way, comparing it to the clear and unambiguous teachings of Jesus. Seek out that good fruit with all your heart and do all you can to bring it forth, no matter the cost, and you will not

only save your soul, you will also help feed others with the good fruit of Heaven.



Deacon Kasprzyk sought the good fruit of Jesus Christ and shared it with others as a husband, father and deacon. He is survived by his loving wife, Loretta, two daughters and four grandchildren.

“With hope in the Resurrection, we offer prayers for the repose of Deacon Kasprzyk’s soul, for his family and friends, the parishioners of St. Thomas the Apostle and Sacred Heart in Muskegon, and the faithful of the Diocese of Saginaw and the Diocese of Grand Rapids who have been impacted by his ministry,” wrote Bishop Robert Gruss and Bishop David Walkowiak of the Diocese of Grand Rapids in a joint statement.

“Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May Deacon Kasprzyk rest in peace.” †

faith Saginaw

The Magazine of the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw

The Most Rev. Robert D. Gruss
PUBLISHER

Volume 15 • Issue 4 • 2021

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

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A simple reward **FOR A GOOD MAN**

----- The ice cream 'miracle' -----

BREAKFAST PENANCE OR QUIRKY HABIT?

Father Solanus Casey was known for mixing his cereal, milk, sugar, juice and coffee in one bowl! Hence, the ice cream flavor in his honor!

MICHELLE DIFRANCO
is a designer and the busy
mom of three children.



Blessed Solanus Casey lived an extraordinary life of holiness and deep concern for the poor and the sick. He was beatified at Ford Field in Detroit in November of 2017.

In order for beatification to take place, the Church requires an official recognized miracle. In his case, a woman suffering from an incurable genetic skin disease was healed after praying at his tomb. While that was the official miracle recognized for beatification, there is another story in Father Solanus' life that some people consider a "miracle" – an ice cream miracle!

Born in Wisconsin in 1870, Bernard Francis Casey was one of 16 children of Irish immigrant parents. After leaving his family farm, he worked as a logger, hospital orderly, prison guard and streetcar operator. While at work one day he witnessed a murder, which affected him deeply; it was an experience that served as a catalyst for a higher calling.

He felt drawn into entering the seminary, which he did, but encountered many academic challenges there. Because of these struggles, he was ordained a simplex priest, which meant he could not celebrate Mass or hear confessions. Undeterred, Father Solanus Casey viewed his vocation as a gift from God and resolved only to be a holy priest, so he graciously accepted his role to serve as the porter at the St. Bonaventure Monastery in Detroit. He embraced his humble ministry with a deep love for Jesus and for *all* who would come to the door, particularly the sick, the poor and the troubled. He became the channel for God to touch souls and tend to the most needy in his midst. Indeed, through his prayers and blessings, there were many miracles of both physical healing and spiritual conversion.

This holy man once wrote, "We must be faithful to the present moment or we will frustrate the plan of God for our lives." He inspired people to peacefully accept and find joy in everything and encouraged them to "thank God ahead of time" for what he has not yet given.

Father Solanus' feast day is July 30, at the height of summer, and there is a lighthearted story often told of summertime's favorite food not melting under his care, against all odds. On a hot summer day in 1941, a fellow friar came to Father Solanus seeking a blessing before heading off to the dentist for treatment of an infection in his tooth. The novice worried of the consequences upon his return, that this would be a major setback in his formation. Father Solanus blessed him and told him to "trust God that everything would work out."

Then a woman stopped by the monastery to give Father Solanus two ice cream cones as a gesture of gratitude for his having helped her with a particular need. He received the ice cream graciously but was very busy, so he set the cones in the drawer of his desk. More than half an hour later, the young novice returned and reported that the dentist found nothing wrong with his tooth and that it had completely and spontaneously healed without any medical attention. Father Solanus thought of the ice cream cones as a way to celebrate. Now, one would think after so much time in the hot summer weather, the ice cream would have melted into sticky wet pools. Father Solanus opened the drawer and found them as cold as if they had been in the freezer all along.

Father Solanus touched many lives in his time at the monastery. Many believed he had the gift of healing. This tale of the ice cream that didn't melt is beautiful in its simplicity – a simple reward for a good man humbly doing God's work. †



CINNAMON TOAST & COFFEE NO-CHURN

Ice Cream

(SERVES 6)

- 2 cups heavy cream, chilled
- 1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 tablespoons instant espresso or coffee powder
- 1 ½ cups cinnamon toast cereal, slightly crushed

Place a 9-by-5 inch metal loaf pan in the freezer to chill for at least 20 minutes.

In a small container, combine the sweetened condensed milk with the espresso powder. It may take a few minutes of stirring (or letting it sit for a few minutes and then stirring more) to fully dissolve. Place in fridge.

Using a hand mixer with the whisk attachment, whip the heavy cream until stiff peaks are formed (this will take 3-5 minutes). Fold in the espresso-flavored condensed milk and stir until combined.

Pour mixture into the chilled loaf pan and freeze for 30 minutes. Remove and stir in half of the slightly crushed cinnamon toast cereal. Top off with remaining cereal. Cover completely and freeze for at least eight hours or overnight for best results. For added deliciousness, serve in chocolate-dipped cones rolled in extra cereal!

“He became the channel for God to touch souls and tend to the most needy in his midst.”

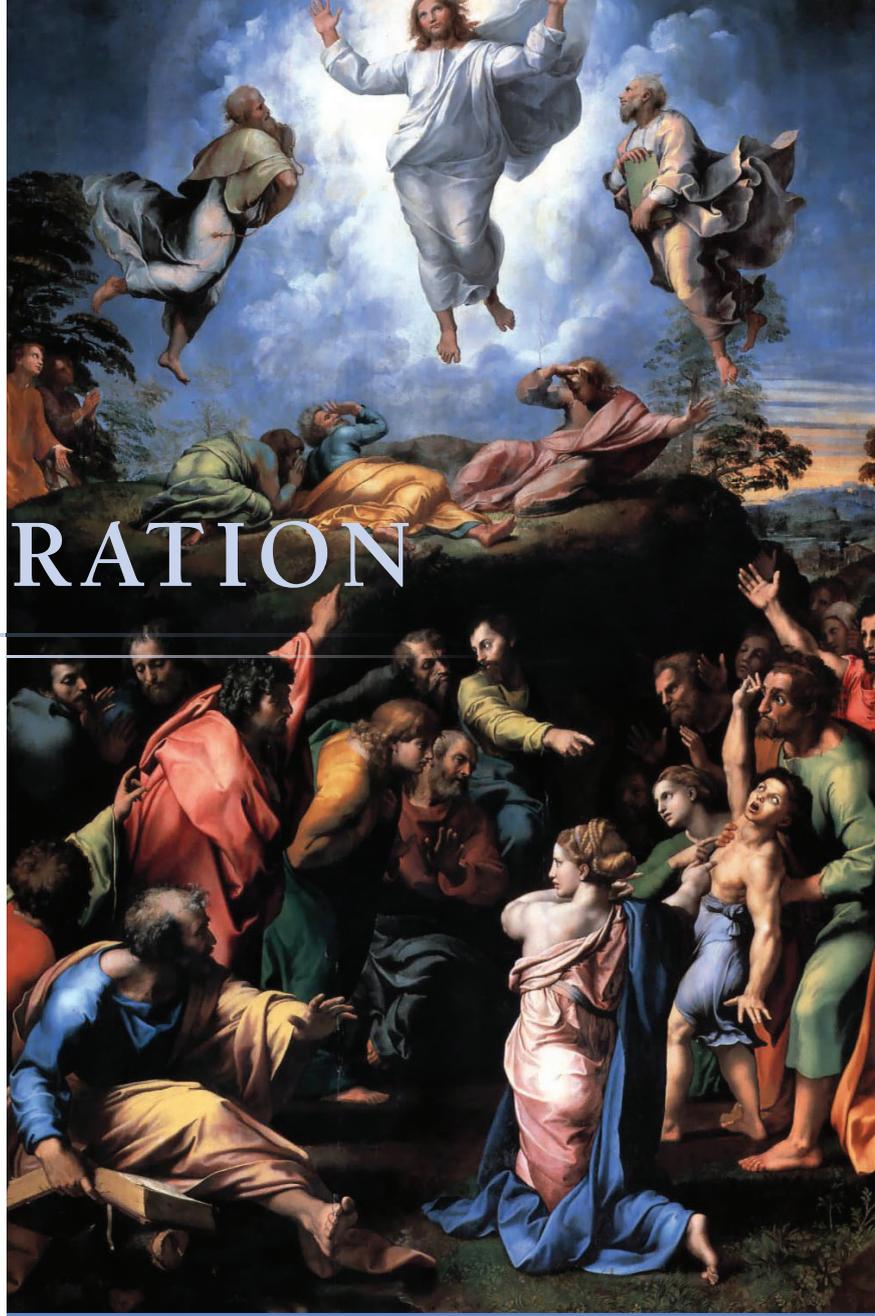
Plaid by Getty Images/OGR

The miracle of the TRANSFIGURATION

In all three Gospel accounts, Peter sees the glorified body of Jesus, along with the presence of Moses and Elijah, and offers to build booths for them. His intent to do so is likely so that this heralding of the Messiah – demonstrated by the presence of Elijah and Moses, as Scripture foretold – might be seen and celebrated by all. Instead, Jesus tells the apostles that they should stay quiet, *until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.* (Mt 17:9)

Peter's instincts were not misguided, just misdirected. "To bring others to Christ" and "let others see and know what we have seen and what we know" is, of course, our Gospel mandate. But Jesus was not to remain on that mountainside – his death and resurrection would be how God's saving plan for his people would be accomplished. The Transfiguration was meant to strengthen the apostles' faith and assure them of his divine nature, in anticipation that his crucifixion would strike fear in their hearts. God the Father even spoke: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." (Mt 17:5)

This charge – to listen to Jesus – was meant not just for the three apostles present, but for all of us. We shouldn't simply *hear* Jesus' words but *listen*, as in let Jesus' message sink in deeply and move us to action. To *listen* to Jesus means to heed him. As Jesus was transfigured, giving us a preview of sorts of the glorified life with God that awaits us all, we are transformed by our encounter with him. That transformation is meant to make us closer to Jesus not just in our relationship with him, but in who we *are*: Christ-like in our interactions with others; loving one



another in the same selfless, self-sacrificing way that God loves us.

Society loves to label people, but what if we approached everyone we met – both family and strangers – as the fellow children of God that they are? If we perceive others as having human dignity, made in the image and likeness of God, we encounter the Lord in them. Looking at others mercifully through the eyes of Christ can foster forgiveness, bring personal healing and strengthen our human relationships. The miracle of the Transfiguration shows us that following Jesus in word and deed is what we are called to do. With this perspective, we can transform our lives and the lives of others.

The feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord is Aug. 6. †



VERONICA SZCZYGIEL
is the assistant director of online learning at Fordham University's Graduate School of Education.



Bay City priest receives award for Catholic schools support

Father José María Cabrera, pastor of All Saints Parish in Bay City, was named a recipient of the Father John B. Zwiers Award by the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools (MANS), an advocacy organization for more than 400 schools throughout the state. The award recognizes members of the clergy with a strong

history of support for faith-based schools.

“I am so very excited to hear that Father José has been chosen for the award,” said Lisa Rhodus, principal of All Saints Central Elementary and Middle/High Schools in Bay City. “Father José

has been such a true blessing to our students and staff here at All Saints Central schools. Our students and staff know that Father José supports our schools, and he demonstrates that through Mass, his wonderful homilies, his presence and his interaction with our students.”

“May (the award) be for the glory of Jesus and for the good of our All Saints Catholic Schools,” said Father José María Cabrera.

Father José will be recognized with the award on Oct. 15 at the MANS Administrators’ Conference in Thompsonville.

“(Father José) has made such a positive impact on our school, for example, taking the time to talk to our second grade students while they are preparing for their sacraments, taking their class on a tour of the church, blessing the rosaries our fourth grade students made, or being at so many of the special events we hold throughout the year,” Lisa continued. “In addition, during COVID, Father José added two more Masses to his weekly Mass schedule to ensure our students could celebrate liturgy as a school. We feel so blessed to have Father José! We love him!”

Bishop Gruss grants permission for priests to celebrate Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite (Latin Mass) as he studies new document

On July 16, Pope Francis restored limits on the celebration of the Mass according to the Roman Missal in use before the Second Vatican Council. The Holy Father said he was acting for the good of the unity of the Catholic Church in restricting the permissions St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI had given to celebrate the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite.

“An opportunity offered by St. John Paul II and, with even greater magnanimity, by Benedict XVI, intended to recover the unity of an ecclesial body with diverse liturgical sensibilities, was exploited to widen the gaps, reinforce the divergences and encourage disagreements that injure the church, block her path and expose her to the peril of division,” Pope Francis wrote in a letter to bishops.

The changes the pope has announced include a greater role of each bishop in authorizing the use of the 1962 Roman Missal, determining locations where the Extraordinary Form is celebrated, appointing a priest to oversee the pastoral care of groups that celebrate the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite and determining that people who attend the Mass do not deny the legitimacy of the Ordinary Form of the Mass.

The announcement comes after Pope Francis, in consultation with bishops from around the world, determined that the norms established in 2007, permitting priests to offer the Extraordinary Form of the Mass broadly, have caused disunity in the Church. He said this has happened by separating people from the Ordinary Form of the Mass established following the Second Vatican Council.



In the Diocese of Saginaw, the Extraordinary Form of the Mass was recently made available again in December 2020. The Mass is celebrated each week at Holy Family Church in Saginaw. Several diocesan priests celebrate the Mass on a rotating basis and Bishop Robert Gruss has given them permission to continue to do so as he studies the apostolic letter, *Traditiones custodes*.

Once a careful review is complete, and mindful of those who are drawn to the Extraordinary Form, Bishop Gruss will offer further guidance regarding how *Traditiones custodes* will be implemented across the Diocese of Saginaw to help ensure the unifying effect desired.

Befriender Ministry Informational Evening

Date: Thursday, Aug. 26

Time: 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Location: St. Thomas Aquinas
Parish, 5376 State St., Saginaw

Cost: Free

Registration or for more information: Call Lori Becker, Respect Life
Coordinator at (989) 797-6652

At times, everyone experiences difficult and transitional situations. Befriender Ministry offers a caring companion to listen, empathize and be a reminder of a loving and supportive faith community.

Befriender ministers are trained listeners who offer support to people through active listening, prayer and presence.

This informational evening will share the history of Befrienders in the Diocese of Saginaw, an overview of the program, what to expect in a training and stories from Befriender ministers on how this has impacted their lives and ministry. Join us to prayerfully discover how God may be calling you to this amazing ministry. No commitment is required.

Holy Spirit Parish Mission: Live with Passion!

Dates: Sunday, Sept. 19 to

Tuesday, Sept. 21

Time: 7 p.m.

Location: Holy Spirit Parish,
1035 N. River Road, Saginaw

Cost: Freewill offering

Registration: No registration needed

Presenter: Father Cedric Pisegna,
C.P. (www.frcedric.org)

For more information: Visit
www.saginawhsp.org or call
the parish at (989) 781.2457

All are invited to experience Holy Spirit Parish's fall mission with Father Cedric Pisegna, C.P. Each evening, there will be a

Word service with Father Cedric preaching for about 45 minutes. Along with worship music, Sunday night's talk is titled "Be Lifted Up!" Monday night will also include a Reconciliation service and the talk "Don't Stay Stuck!" Tuesday night will include Mass and the talk "Come Holy Spirit!"

Father Cedric, a Passionist priest, seeks to help people come to know Jesus in a personal way. He is a preacher, writer and television producer whose work has been featured on Catholic television and radio stations. He has authored 24 books.

Misa Hispana

Date: Saturday, Sept. 18

Time: 4 p.m.

Location: Cathedral of Mary
of the Assumption, 615 Hoyt Ave.,
Saginaw

For more information: Contact
Deacon Librado Gayton
at (989) 797-6604 or
lgayton@dioceseofsaginaw.org

The annual Misa Hispana brings together the diverse members from throughout the Diocese to celebrate together the rich culture of our Hispanic/Latino communities during National Hispanic Awareness Month. After this bilingual Mass, attendees will be invited to share a meal in the cathedral basement, if possible.

St. Joseph Summit 2021 virtual conference

Date: Thursday, Sept. 30 to

Sunday, Oct. 3

Location: Online

Cost: Free 3-day pass or lifetime
access for \$50

Presenters: Father James Calloway,
Father Mike Schmitz, Dr. Scott Hahn,
Leah Darrow, Jason and Crystalina
Evert, filmmaker James Wahlberg
and more

To register: www.spiritfilledevents.com/offers/qd4MqT7f/checkout

For more information:

www.spiritfilledevents.com

More than 40 of the most trusted and inspirational Catholic presenters in the Church today will be sharing teaching and personal witness about our spiritual father, St. Joseph, during this historic Year of St. Joseph.

Designed to be a pilgrimage into the heart of our spiritual father, this online conference will help attendees develop a greater devotion to St. Joseph and learn how to protect yourself, your marriage and your family against evil. Presentations will explore topics such as how to have St. Joseph as a spiritual father, bringing St. Joseph into the life of your family and the Church, the keys to overcoming doubt, hesitation and fear and how to hear God's voice.

The free pass includes access to more than 40 recorded presentations, live morning prayer time and free downloads.

Marriage Preparation Workshop

Date: Saturday, Oct. 30

Location: Online

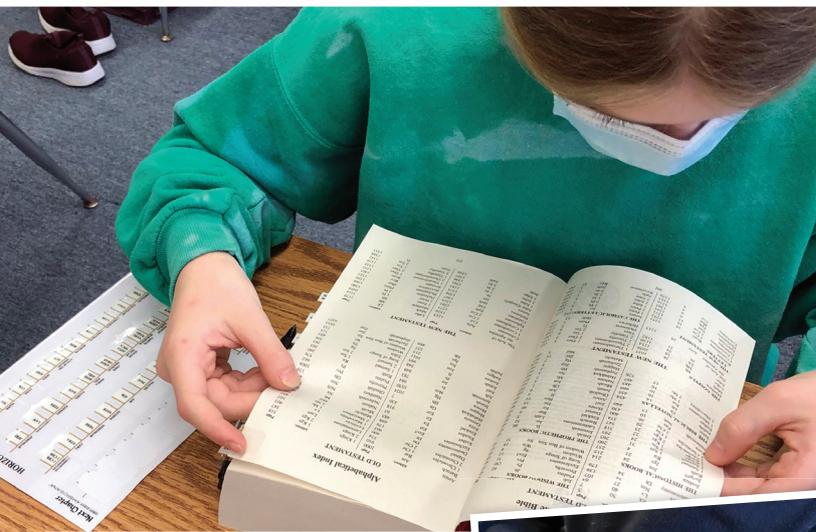
Time: 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Cost: \$50 per couple

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

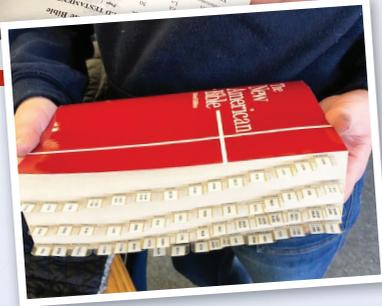
Registration deadline: Oct. 28

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



Grant provides sixth-grade students NEW BIBLES

BY MARY BETH LOOBY



Thanks to a grant from the Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan (CCFMM) Goodwill Fund, sixth-grade students at Nouvel Catholic Central Elementary (NCCE) now have their own Bibles to read God's word throughout their lives.

NCCE sixth-grade teacher Janna Witten, who applied for the grant, said it's a blessing for the class. Smooth, fresh Bibles replaced the old, worn classroom set with torn covers and brown pages.

"The Christ Our Life (religion) book series, adopted by NCCE in the 2019-20 school year, encourages a lot of Bible reading, which we do in class weekly," she said.

Janna also ordered specialty index tabs for the 73 books of the Bible. Students spent an entire religion class adhering the tabs to the corresponding pages to help them locate specific books and passages.

"They love the ease of finding things through the use of the index tabs," Janna said. "In fact, the tabs help level the playing field, making the Bible more accessible for all my students."

Janna said the students have a real sense of pride in their new Bibles. Some have even purchased Bible covers.

This is a crucial age, Janna believes, as it forms a habit of Bible-reading. Also, students will enter seventh grade with the required Bible, tabbed and with valuable experience locating passages.

Janna also purchased a couple extra Bibles for any students new to NCCE in junior high—a "Welcome to your spiritual journey" gift, Janna said.

Janna and her students are very appreciative of the new Bibles.

"I see a great deal of enthusiasm for reading the Bible," she said. "Two of my students told me they want to read the whole Bible, and one girl spends all her free time reading her Bible."

The thank-you letters students sent the CCFMM are proof: "My Bible helps me lead a better and more spiritual life," one read. "Thank you so much for the amazing Bibles you gave us. It helps me keep my faith," said another.

"The value of providing Bibles for Catholic students to own is beyond measure, for reading the Bible will shape the choices they make growing up," said Kristin Smith, executive director of the CCFMM.

Kristin hopes the CCFMM can provide all Catholic school sixth-graders with a Bible, and she is confident the Holy Spirit will lead the foundation in making this happen. In fact, Kristin envisions that a newly-formed St. Joseph Giving Society through the CCFMM, may be a vehicle for this initiative. Stay tuned for opportunities to give and build up our Catholic community through the St. Joseph Giving Society.

As school ended, Janna offered students this advice: "Spend time reading the book of James, as it has so many good nuggets for living a good Christian life." †

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

Vision: Joyous giving in Jesus Christ to forever meet the needs of all God's people.

Since 2006, the CCFMM has helped create an additional 223 endowments for the parishes, schools and Diocesan ministries. We are here to help guide you with your planned and legacy giving to an existing endowment or a new endowment in memory of or in honor of a loved one.

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



We are happy to talk with you about your parish, school or ministry endowment or explore opportunities for giving.

Call the CCFMM's Executive Director Kristin Smith at 989.599.0079 or kristin.smith@ccfmm.org

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