

THE MAGAZINE

OF THE CATHOLIC

DIOCESE OF

SAGINAW

Mar./Apr. 2021

faith *Saginaw*

FAITH MATTERS:

Seven surprising truths
of the Catholic Church



FEATURES:

- + Debbie Hamilton takes Catechesis of the Good Shepherd on the road
- + Local Sisters of St. Joseph share their vocation stories

Derek: A Journey of Faith, Hope and Love

An inspiring story of life after attempted suicide



10255185_880 / iStock / Getty Images Plus

Our faith stories *connect us*

In January, I received a phone call that I won't ever forget. A mother from Holy Name of Mary Parish in Harbor Beach called to share with me the heartbreaking story of her son Derek, who attempted suicide in 2014, and is in need of funds to receive a face transplant that insurance does not cover.



**ERIN LOOBY
CARLSON**

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

She hadn't yet shared their story publicly and described being prompted by the Holy Spirit to call.

It touched my heart that the first place she felt comfortable reaching out, to share what their family has experienced these last seven years, was the publication of our diocese, *FAITH Saginaw*.

We are humbled to share their story, just as we have been humbled to share so many of your inspiring faith stories and testimonies on the pages of this magazine over the last 14 years. Our hope is *FAITH Saginaw* will continue to foster unity and a sense of community across the 11 counties of our local Church.

I remain deeply grateful to be part of this important ministry, and, if you have a story you believe should be shared, please contact me at ecarlson@dioceseofsaginaw.org or **989.797.6630**.

May we continue to be encouraged and strengthened by the faithful witness of one another, uplifted in our prayers and support for one another and united in our mission to together share the love of Jesus Christ.

Come Holy Spirit!
Erin

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COVER STORY

Derek Pfaff was a standout football player at Harbor Beach Community High School known for his drive and determination. Since 2014, he has persevered through 58 surgeries and is now waiting for a rare face transplant. "I just want the best for him ... to have a chance to help other people. To be able to go out in public and not have people stare at him, and point at him and call him names and say, 'Did you see him? What happened to him?'" said his mother, Lisa.



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AS SIGNS OF NEW LIFE ABOUND, WE PRAY FOR NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

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

Signs of new life are popping up all around us as winter has given way to a beautiful springtime in our state. This is one of my favorite times of the year. There is a birthing going on in nature – new calves romping in the fields, the budding of the trees, the blossoming of plants, flowers beginning to don clothes of brilliant colors, the grass beginning to return to its brilliance of green. All of these things give us a sense that the miracle of new life is taking place. The dead of winter has been transformed into what we have all been waiting for: warmth, sunshine and opportunities to experience the outdoors once again.

But we also just celebrated the miracle of new life in the Easter event, *“the one Morning Star who never sets, Christ, who coming back from death’s domain, has shed his peaceful light on humanity, and lives and reigns forever and ever.”* At the heart of this miracle stands a God who embraces a fragile world with a love so profound, a love so undeserved, yet so freely offered and given. God’s love for all of creation has led to this intervention into our lives in order to save us from our sinful natures and our own barrenness. God, through the love and blood of Jesus Christ, has brought

springtime into our midst. Ask the Risen Lord to open your heart to this beautiful gift, one that keeps giving.

This was very evident at the Easter Vigil celebrations across our diocese as men, women and children were fully initiated into the life of Christ and his Church. They experienced new life in a special way and have “put on Christ.” A new day has dawned for them. The grace of Christ scattered the darkness of their lives and brought forth to them this Easter joy. We give thanks to God for their witness and desire for the Lord Jesus.

They are living signs to us of the power of the Holy Spirit among us. Please continue to pray for them asking the Lord to deepen this desire within them (and us).

For much of the world, Easter may seem for many a one-day event. But for Christians who live the Easter joy, we know that the Easter season spans 50 days, concluding on the great feast of Pentecost, when we relive the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit upon Mary and the apostles gathered in prayer. Throughout this Easter season, I am inviting everyone who reads this article to pray daily for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This renews us in our relationship with Christ and our dedication of our call to discipleship. We all need this whether we are the bishop, a priest, deacon, religious or layperson. In many ways today, our culture in America is much like the culture during the time of the early church immediately following the resurrection. Therefore, we need this renewal in the power of the Holy Spirit more than ever.

A renewed encounter with the Holy Spirit will not only bring new life to our lives, but also to our families, parishes and our diocese. I am praying for this tremendous gift. Therefore, I am asking every person and every parish across our diocese to join with me in praying a novena to the Holy Spirit in preparation for the Solemnity of Pentecost, May 23. We all need a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. An authentic and renewed conversion to our Lord Jesus Christ can

***“The Holy Spirit changes hearts,
changes situations and changes lives.”***

only happen through the power of the Holy Spirit, that same Spirit that transformed the lives of those disciples in the upper room at Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit changes hearts, changes situations and changes lives. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit radically changed the early disciples from fearful, scared, lost men and women into courageous witnesses to Christ and enlightened heralds of his Word. It was the Spirit who guided them along the difficult and new paths of mission, that same mission that has been given to every baptized person. We ask the Holy Spirit to bring about an amazing renewal among us.

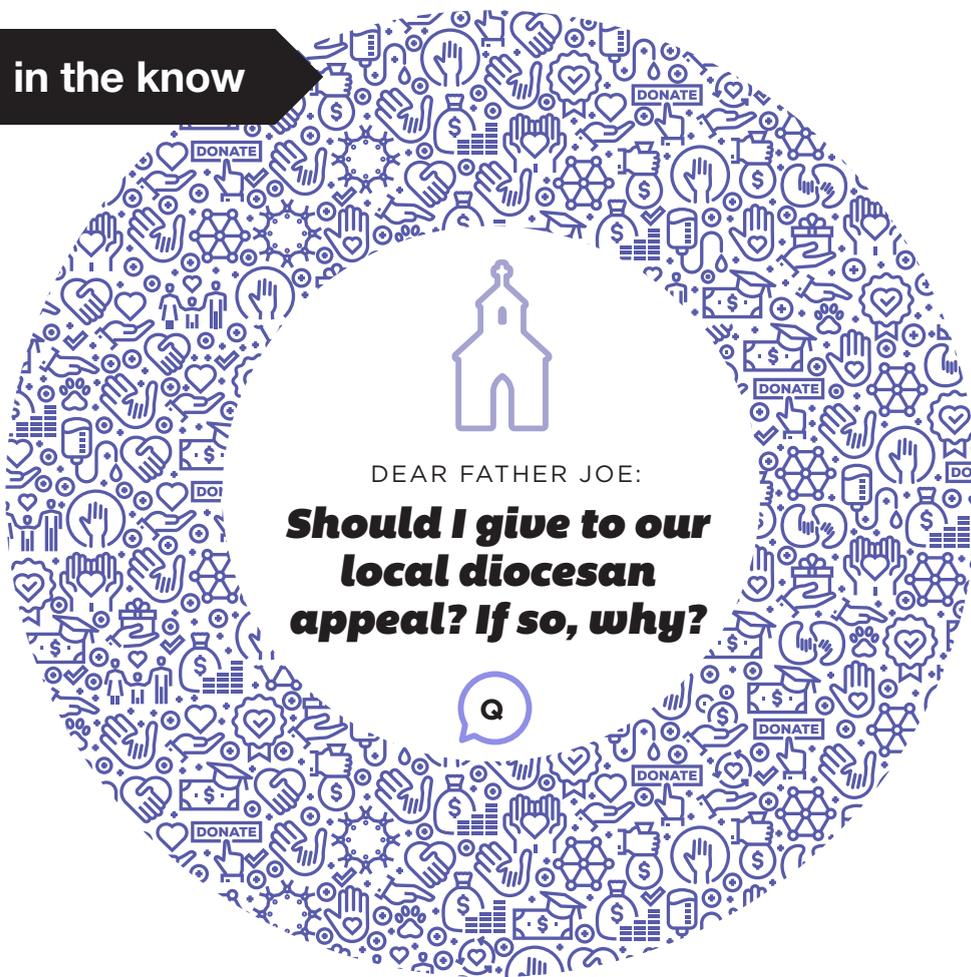
By the time you are reading this, hopefully you will have received the Novena to the Holy Spirit I mailed to you along with my Easter letter. The novena is also available on the diocesan website, www.saginaw.org. Special thanks to the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans) for offering this novena for us to pray.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love! †



Novena to the Holy Spirit

Use your smartphone camera to scan this code for the Novena to the Holy Spirit prayers or visit the diocesan website, www.saginaw.org.



DEAR FATHER JOE:

Should I give to our local diocesan appeal? If so, why?

Q

A I get lots of questions from parishioners about the wider Church's fundraising efforts, specifically the once-a year-effort. It's an important topic; so let me share my thoughts with you on this.



FATHER JOE KRUPP

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

Twitter: @Joeinblack

First of all, in my parishes, as in most, we take up collections every week that we can. We do this because we need money to operate. The money goes to the practical and the mission. In terms of practical, the biggest expense is salaries and insurance. In the budget at both of my parishes, that is by far the biggest expense, even with our painfully underpaid employees.

Beyond that, we spend a significant amount of our resources ministering to the poor and to our parishioners.

Neither the practical nor the ministerial would be possible if we didn't take up collections every week.

I would assume that this is the norm for most parishes.

Now, if we take the diocese we are within, we will see that it has the exact same needs but on a much bigger scale. The diocese needs to do what individual parishes do but without a weekly collection. Instead, it counts on us to take up one big collection each year so that it can minister and help each parish minister.

Let's look at how the diocese cares for the poor and vulnerable first.

CHARITABLE WORK

In your diocese, it would simply astound you if you were to track the vast and efficient

charitable work that is carried out. In its ministry to the poorest and most vulnerable, I think you would swell with holy pride at what your diocese has done and continues to do. It is almost impossible to imagine how the regions in our diocese would function were it not for the amazing work that the Church does. The government assistance programs would find themselves overwhelmed if we weren't able to help.

None of this would happen without an annual diocesan appeal.

The annual appeal is also the means by which the diocese ministers spiritually.

EDUCATION OF SEMINARIANS

A big-budget item for any diocese is the education and training of young men who are discerning priesthood. If a young man discerns that God may be calling him to the priesthood, it's quite the process. It takes a minimum of eight years, usually nine or 10. To educate a priest, you need professors who have unique degrees and, frankly, there just aren't many people with those degrees. Beyond that, a seminarian should be in community with other young men discerning priesthood.

You put these together and you have a very expensive, but necessary, education process, and it's literally *only* possible through the annual appeal collection.

CARING FOR THE FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS NEEDS OF ALL THE PARISHES

There is another good that is a bit harder for me to explain but is, in fact, the most pervasive means by which the appeal helps your parish specifically.

Any diocese that is well coordinated treats the whole enterprise as one unit, in some ways. When it comes to insurance, a diocese saves

the people of God significant money by pooling the insured. Instead of individual parishes attempting to secure rates for insurance, a diocese is able to broker lower rates by grouping us.

When it comes to building projects, your parish has access to specialists and wisdom that it would not have without spending a lot of money. At both of my parishes, we had significant projects to complete, and we saved an amazing amount of money by not having to hire specialists; instead we were “gifted” with the specialists that our collective money funded through our diocesan appeal. We were able to secure bridge loans that no bank would’ve given us.

A specific example:

When I first came to my parish, I found we were significantly behind in our insurance payments, and frankly, our math told us it was going to take some time to get this done. The diocese stepped in and helped us to work it all out, and the great news is that we caught up in less than two years. To be clear, if it weren't for the diocese helping us, we would've been in some longer-term trouble.

To sum it up folks, once a year, the diocese asks each parish to step up and support the work that it does. Just as parishes must pay employees, cover insurance, care for the poor and needy, educate kids and minister to those in need, the diocese has those exact same needs and yet cannot/does not do a weekly collection.

I could go on and on ... I genuinely feel a holy and joyful burden to share with everyone I can what a blessing the diocese is for us, and it's my hope that by sharing this all with you, you get a sense of why it's such a good thing to support the annual appeal.

As for me, I am making my pledge this week. I ask you to do the same.

Enjoy another day in God's presence. †



To support Christ's Mission Appeal visit
www.Saginaw.org.



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habits of the heart

The heart that prays

As written so piercingly in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

Where does prayer come from? Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays. But in naming the source of prayer, Scripture speaks sometimes of the soul or the spirit, but most often of the heart (more than a thousand times). According to Scripture, it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain.

St. Francis de Sales described prayer as a “sacred inclination given it [the heart] by holy love to unite itself ever more and more to supreme goodness ... as long as we are in this life God's love is a movement...” We are drawn by the love of God, and we grow in His goodness. God's heart bids us further into His love.

“The heart is the dwelling place where I am, where I live ... the place to which I withdraw.” Now let us consider a misconception of prayer: that prayer is directed in a totally outward direction. Prayer reinforces our relationship with God; it is a calling out to God. But doesn't experience teach us that prayer jolts us interiorly at times? We surrender within. In the silence of our hearts, we learn about ourselves and even gain the courage to look at our shortcomings and stubbornness.

“The heart is a hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others.” How can we deny that our greatest strength and resolve come from prayer? Within our hidden center, we know God will not abandon us, even when we recognize inadequacies we wish were not present. In prayer, weaknesses and faults are offerings which need purification through God's love. Surely there can be no end to purification in this lifetime; we are wayfarers.

Find in your heart a time to withdraw in prayer. Allow God's love to draw you closer. Ahh, let us nourish the heart that prays. †

Catechism 2562

Saint Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, Volume 2 (Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, 1974) 15-16

Catechism 2563

Catechism 2563



SISTER MARY JUDITH O'BRIEN, RSM

is a member of the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma. She serves as chancellor of the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw.



HOW TO BE BOTH *consistent & loving*

MAKE A PLAN!

Be clear about the expectation and the consequence so there aren't any surprises, and be sure to have this chat when everyone is calm and not in the middle of a conflict. Start small; tackle one or two things at a time.

OUR KIDS NEED LOTS OF THINGS. They need fun, adventure, faith, vegetables and consistent structure (not necessarily in that order!). Some of those are certainly more desirable through the eyes of a child than others, but they all help create strong, healthy kids. One thing parenting experts agree on is that children thrive when they are in an environment that is structured, dependable and consistent. There are days when our tank runs low, and consistent discipline can take more energy than we have left, so here are a few tips for maintaining consistent, loving parenting even when giving in and making the kids happy would seem easier.

IT TAKES TIME.

Behaviors aren't going to change overnight, but if those behaviors are met with consistent consequences and responses each time they occur, things will change.

Consistent discipline is how we raise great humans, and we do it out of love. Don't forget to ask for the help of the Father, who loves our kids even more than we do! †

PRAY FOR GUIDANCE,

pray for strength and pray in thanksgiving for the times you see growth. In moments of turmoil, stop and say to your child, "Things aren't going well right now; let's take a minute to pray and ask Jesus to help us do the right thing."

RESISTANCE IS INEVITABLE!

There will be push-back, so rise up and prepare for it.

RESPOND WITH CONSISTENCY.

Build a sense of trust and security in children. If they can whine and get what they want one day and whine and don't get their way another day, it leaves them confused and unsure. The message to them is "push back harder."



SHERI WOHLFERT

is a Catholic school teacher, speaker, writer and founder of Joyful Words Ministries. Sheri blogs at www.joyfulwords.org.





SHE SAYS:

I want to go back to school for a master's degree

This is the best plan for our family moving forward, and it will benefit everyone. Matt's being short-sighted.



HE SAYS:

I won't have any free time between taking care of the kids and my job

I support the idea, but Mary Rose will be gone most evenings. We both work full time, so I will be responsible for meals and homework duty during the week.



WHAT DO THEY DO?

What we're hearing is that you, Matt, are squirming about the discomfort of having to spend more time taking care of your children. But try to think less of how you will be inconvenienced and more about how your children will be having less time with their mother.

More on that in a moment, but first, Mary Rose, make doubly-sure that getting this master's really is the right choice. It's good to want to grow your talents, but only if it leads to a more decent quality of life for your family. Think big picture. You will be sacrificing time away from your children in the short run, so make sure you're confident this decision will lead to more and better time with them in the long run.

Do a sincere self-check together to ensure that your motivating goals are not just gaining for your family more money, prestige or stuff, but rather opening up better ways to love, protect and prepare your children before they launch into the world. As Pope Francis put it in *Amoris Laetitia*: "Only if we devote time to our children, speaking of important things with simplicity and concern, and finding healthy ways for them to spend their time, will we be able to shield them from harm."

Assuming you've passed this self-check and it's a go for the master's, you might need to do another self-check: gender role assumptions. Consider this scenario: For the good of their family, a father must go to work for long stretches of time while a mother is left alone to care for their children. You'd admire both for making sacrifices, right?

Now switch around the words "father" and "mother." If this leaves you feeling not only that both would be making sacrifices, but also that the father would somehow be making an even greater sacrifice, then it might be time to re-evaluate your gender role assumptions.



STEVE AND BRIDGET PATTON hold master's degrees in theology and counseling and serve as family life ministers in the Diocese of Sacramento.

These cultural assumptions run deep. Studies show that even in double-career households, women bear a disproportionate share of child care and other domestic chores. That's fine if both parties are good with it, but it sounds like maybe that's not the case with you. If so, have an honest and humble talk ... and be willing to change. †



Getty Images/Shironosov

Former mail carrier now delivers the faith to children ...

one box at a time



Debbie Hamilton of Ss. Francis & Clare Parish of Birch Run is responsible for faith formation for children up to 11 years old. Since the COVID-19 pandemic stopped her from teaching in person, Hamilton created a series of boxes filled with lessons called "Atrium on the Road" and delivers them to children in her parish. She has a stack of boxes ready for delivery in her truck.

“Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds” is the informal motto associated with postal workers.

BY ERIKA M. HIRSCHMAN

PHOTOS BY JEFF SCHRIER

Former mail carrier Debbie Hamilton can now add pandemic to that list.

Debbie no longer delivers the mail. Rather, she delivers the faith as the director of religious education at Ss. Francis and Clare Parish in Birch Run.

When the pandemic shut down in-person instruction, Debbie decided it was time to get back on the road. Her desire to continue teaching her students has taken her 80 miles each week down dirt roads, across small towns and through all kinds of weather.

“It’s the path God showed me during the pandemic,” she said.

Debbie, who is certified in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, needed a way to catechize children that didn’t require WiFi and electronic devices, adding that internet connection is not always reliable in the communities her parish serves. In addition, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd relies heavily on tangibles and values contemplation and the enjoyment of God, so it does not easily lend itself to

virtual instruction.

“I love to see what Catechesis of the Good Shepherd awakens in each child,” Debbie said. “They’re little sponges. I love seeing God in them and to help lay that foundation.”

Founded in the 1950s by two Italian laywomen, one a scriptural scholar and one an expert in Montessori education, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd embraces a Montessori-style (hands-on) approach to learning the Catholic faith and experiencing God’s love.

“It’s my purpose: to teach kids their faith,” Debbie said. “Your faith is there to fall back on in hard times; it’s where you feel loved.”

Items that once filled the Ss. Francis and Clare parish atrium were carefully packed into boxes. An atrium is a prepared environment where students who participate in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd engage in their work and converse with God.

“A lot of (students) were asking:



Debbie shows a model of the city of Jerusalem in the Level II Atrium where she would normally teach 7 and 8 year olds. She created a mobile lesson that duplicates this lesson.

“Where’s Atrium? When’s Atrium coming back?” she said, adding the teachers missed their students as well. “We wanted to see their bright and shining faces.”

Debbie was inspired to bring the atrium to her students. She filled each box with everything a student needed for a full lesson in an effort to keep them engaged and connected with the parish.

“It was an opportunity for the kids to grow in faith alongside their families and inside their own homes.”

Each Wednesday since fall, Debbie travels to each student’s home with a new lesson contained inside the box.

“Sometimes they’re waiting for me outside,” Debbie said. “They’re so excited. They ask me what’s in the new box or (share)

Debbie Hamilton swaps a new lesson for an old one with Makenzie Talbot, 6, and her sister Maddison Talbot, 10. Since the COVID-19 pandemic stopped her from teaching in person, Debbie created a series of boxes filled with lessons called “Atrium on the Road” and delivers them to children in her parish.



what they liked about the ones that I pick up.”

After retrieving the boxes, Debbie sanitizes them before filling each again with the new lesson. The students can touch, feel and play with the materials. For example, one lesson had the students fill the miniature churches with people they wanted to see in the congregation, along with the priest, lectors and choir.

“At first parents were going to have to pick (the boxes) up. That became difficult with people working or not being able to leave the house. I decided I would be the one to deliver (the boxes). I was a former mail carrier, so I didn’t mind,” Debbie said.

Parents learn alongside their children with the step-by-step instructions in each box. Debbie knew that in addition to inconsistent internet for some students, Zoom classes wouldn’t work for all, as her students are as young as 3. She said some families were already feeling overwhelmed with trying to keep up with their regular school day.

Lisa Belill, a lifelong parishioner of Ss. Francis and Clare, said her daughters Felicity, 5, and Adaline, 3, would not have benefitted from another online class or more worksheets. Their attention spans could not have held on that long.

“The role of teachers is to help students get off their devices, not just give worksheets or read this book online. This really strengthened our faith,” she said, adding that the girls already have more screen time than they would prefer. “We love what Mrs. Hamilton has created. She made it easy to use; the kids are engaged and excited. They can’t wait to see what she brings next.”

Lisa said the simple, beautiful lessons brought her family closer by enriching their Catholic faith.

“I can’t even express how grateful we are

to Mrs. Hamilton. The time and love she puts into these boxes-- she has thought of everything. We are blessed,” she said.

Parent Monica Jenrow agrees the hands-on learning is invaluable.

“I thought the (Catechism of the Good Shepherd) option would be online, but instead we received the boxes, and it’s been a fantastic idea. My daughter is engaged, and instead of being on the computer, she’s talking about what’s inside the box,” she said. “It creates more interest, and we talk.

Her fourth-grade daughter Megan is so excited to see what the next lesson is, she sometimes waits in the driveway when Debbie is coming, Monica said. Megan enjoys learning about the liturgical colors, articles of clothing used in church, instruments and the many different maps.

“She especially liked the lesson where she learned about the gestures the priest uses during Mass: holding up the Host, using the cruets and holy water,” Monica said. “She used red and white beads that represented the body and blood of Christ.”

In teaching the faith to children, Debbie’s own faith has been strengthened during her time as a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd instructor, and this past year has been no exception.

“I’m just in awe of the kids and what they come up with,” Debbie said. “They ask profound questions.”

It also has invited Debbie to ponder the same question many of us have asked ourselves during the pandemic.

“During this time, we have to ask: ‘What is essential?’ The word of God.

The bare minimum.” †

ACCORDING TO THE UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF THE CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (CGSUSA.ORG):

“We believe that God and the child have a unique relationship with one another, particularly before the age of six; that growth of this relationship should be assisted by the adult, but is directed by the Spirit of God; that children need their own place to foster the growth of that relationship; and that the child’s spiritual growth is best served through tangible but indirect means.”

Debbie explains Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Montessori-based (hands-on) religious education program designed for children ages 3 through 12. The program places emphasis on the child’s “work” of falling in love with Jesus. Through beautiful Biblical presentations by a certified catechist, children are invited to contemplate the mysteries of Christ’s life.

The program, based partly on Maria Montessori’s efforts, has three distinct levels — Level I, Level II and Level III, which are conducted in space called “atriums” and are designed to be developmentally appropriate for learners. There are no textbooks inside the atriums since the program relies on hands-on learning through the use of handmade objects, wooden materials and often miniature replicas of the parish’s own altar and baptismal font. Each level presents topics such as parables of the Kingdom of God, creation, prophets, the Last Supper, the Eucharist, liturgical colors, baptism, gestures of the Mass, Biblical maxims, infancy narratives and more.

Visitors to any atrium would be pleasantly surprised at the level of silence in the space. The Montessori approach invites calmness, reverence, quietude, time to create, time to commune with God and helps a child focus on extending their work, in their own way, after witnessing the presentations. The main goal is to aid the child in internalizing their love for God.

GROW + GO

MAKING YOUR INTERCESSORY PRAYER FRUITFUL



Getty Images/Kalawin

There's something refreshingly noble about the faithful grandmother earnestly praying Rosary after Rosary for her children and grandchildren. The steadfast faith, the unwavering devotion and genuine belief in the power of her prayers all inspire admiration but also often concealed and unspoken questions. Does it really matter? Is God actually listening to and answering her prayers?



PETE BURAK is the director of i.d.g.:16. He has a master's degree in theology and is a frequent speaker at events for youth and young adults.

Before I give three tips for fruitful intercessory prayer, I have a confession. We all have people we've promised to pray for, and we've all spent time talking to God on behalf of others. Yet, I've found that far too often, my approach to intercessory prayer is lukewarm, uninspired, inconsistent and lacking in much belief that anything will come of it. Even as I type these words, I'm embarrassed and appalled by this mindset. *Jesus, forgive me for doubting that you're listening,*

that you care and that your answers, even when different from what I'd prefer, are good, true and loving.

The starting line of intercessory prayer is faith. We must believe that we have a good Father who is always listening and always faithful. The Lord searches the earth looking for those who care enough to cry out to him. As Ezekiel 22:30 reveals, "I looked for anyone to repair the wall and **stand in the gap** for me on behalf of the land, so I wouldn't have to destroy it. But I couldn't find anyone." There's no time to waste: our world, families and friends need us before God pleading for his mercy and grace to fill their lives. Here's how we can begin:

Pray in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Advocate. Romans chapter 8 reminds us that the Spirit united with our spirit allows us to cry "Abba, Father." The Spirit unites us to Christ who brings us to the Father, and the good Father always listens to his children.

Be specific and intentional.

General prayers are fine, but praying for specific needs helps us clarify what it is we desire God to do for us. It also allows us to see more clearly when he answers us. When we see him move, it inspires more faith in us and those interceding with us. He never begrudges the slightest, most specific request, so tell him exactly what you're advocating for!

Pair intercession with fasting.

Fasting isn't fun, but it's powerful. By uniting our suffering with Jesus, we participate in the ultimate action of intercession (Christ's death on the cross) and mysteriously unleash a fresh abundance of grace on ourselves and those for whom we're praying.

There's nothing flashy about faithful intercessory prayer, but God notices. So next time you say, "I'll pray for you," mean it, then go stand in the gap. †

GROW as a disciple of Jesus

Are we there yet?

PILGRIMS ON THE WAY



Noel Hendrickson / iStock / Getty Images Plus

“Are we there yet?” We have all heard this (and said it ourselves). It’s not long before these words come out of a child’s mouth as they are strapped in for a trip to see grandma and grandpa or a long-awaited vacation. Seeing the mix of impatience and excitement can be trying. Growing up, the response we heard to this question, regardless of how far away we were, was “23 more miles.” School will soon be ending and people will be eager to travel for their vacations. As Christians, we are travelers in a sense: pilgrims on the way. I believe that one of the ways families can be renewed in faith is by incorporating a sense of pilgrimage in their lives.

In the Old Testament, there were three pilgrim feasts, “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place which we will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths.” (Deuteronomy 16:16). These pilgrimages helped to establish a sense of spirituality in Israel and also served to deepen family and community bonds.

One of the earliest names for Christians was simply followers of “The Way.” This word conveys the truth that Christianity is not just a set of new ideas but a new way. Jesus himself is the way (John 14:6). By understanding ourselves as the way, we affirm his divinity and also affirm that we are to follow in his footsteps until the day he brings us weary travelers to the Father’s house. A pilgrim is not the same as a wanderer. The pilgrim knows exactly where he is going (even if he does not always know how to get there or how long it will take). He is willing to endure difficulties for the sake of the destination and is willing to be led by those who know the way. Pilgrimages give a sense of shared history, traditions, values and purpose. Pope Benedict XVI says, “To go on pilgrimage is not simply to visit a place to admire its treasures of nature, art or history. To go on pilgrimage really means to step out of ourselves in order to encounter God where he has revealed himself” (Nov. 6, 2010 address). The purpose of a pilgrimage is not just to see something new, but to encounter God in a new way.

Families can be kindling in the Church by embracing a “pilgrimage spirituality.” What are ways you can do this? First, make a pilgrimage each year as a family. Imagine if all of our families did this. There would be tremendous renewal in the Church and also in family life. It is not as hard as it might sound. I have been blessed to experience several pilgrimages to holy sites, especially the Holy Land; however, there are family pilgrimages that also instill faith. Just in Michigan, one could take a pilgrimage to the Cross in the Woods in Indian River, the Solanus Casey Center in Detroit, the Our Lady of the Woods Shrine in Mio, or perhaps even a Sunday visit to the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Saginaw. Second, when planning vacations, do a little research and see if there are any holy sites, shrines or beautiful churches to visit on the way or at your destination. This helps remind your family that even on vacation, God is still the center.

Many Christians ask “Are we there yet? When, Lord, will I come to the end of my pilgrimage and enter the presence of God?” Making pilgrimages a part of our spiritual life reminds us that Heaven is our goal. And it reminds us that life is a pilgrimage to the Father’s heart. The next time you hear “Are we there yet?” on your way Up North for family vacation, be reminded of your heavenly destination. Speak to the Lord “Not yet. But soon.” It’s only about 23 more miles. †



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“Believe it or not!”

(FOR CATHOLICS)

Grafner / iStock / Getty Images Plus

I grew up near Niagara Falls. As a little child, I was especially fascinated by a tourist attraction that had popped up on the Canadian side of the Falls: “Ripley’s Believe It or Not!” These days, I would consider this museum to be quite tacky, but the King Kong statue on top of the building was awfully exciting for a young boy to gaze up at. I remember that, as I toured the museum, my mind was filled with questions such as “Is this true?” and “Is this real?” In the spirit of “Ripley’s Believe It or Not,” then, here are seven Catholic truths that some might find surprising...



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+ Jesus is not a human person.

This may sound odd to modern ears, but the teaching of the Church is that Christ is only a divine person (the second person of the Holy Trinity, the eternal Son of the Father). The good news for us is that this divine person took on a human nature when he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary (the history-changing event we call the Incarnation). That is, he took on a human body and a human soul (with a human intellect and a human will). But the Son did not take on human personhood. (Jesus does not suffer from multiple personality disorder!)

There is only one person in Christ – the divine Son. So when Jesus weeps at the tomb of Lazarus, it is in a very real sense God weeping. When he experiences thirst when talking to the woman at the well, it is God

thirsting. And when Jesus dies on the Cross to save us, it is the second person of the Trinity experiencing death in his human nature. The divinity of Christ’s personhood is at the heart of the amazing love story that Christians have the privilege of being part of thanks to our baptisms.

+ Divorced Catholics are not automatically prevented from receiving Holy Communion.

Some Catholics experience the heartbreak of seeing their marriages end in civil divorce, sometimes through no fault of their own. Sadly, many civilly divorced Catholics are under the impression that they should therefore not receive Holy Communion. But the Church actually teaches that, unless the divorced Catholic is aware of being in a state of grave (mortal) sin, she or he is just as free to receive Holy Communion as any other Catholic. It is when a divorced Catholic attempts a civil second marriage without a decree of nullity that a prohibition against receiving Holy Communion would normally come into play. (Note: Pope Francis recently opened up a conversation about this second scenario in a footnote within his letter on marriage, *Amoris Laetitia*.)

+ The Catholic Church allows married priests.

The Catholic Church is like a garden with a rich variety of flowers. There are around 20 recognized liturgical expressions, called rites, in the Catholic Church. In the U.S., we tend to think only in terms of the Latin rite. But as the Catechism of the Catholic

Church notes, there are other rites such as the Byzantine, Alexandrian or Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Maronite and Chaldean rites. All of these rites are truly Catholic and are fully in union with the Bishop of Rome (the pope). The decision to allow or not allow married priests is a matter of discipline, not doctrine, and some Catholic rites do allow married priests. When serving in Ukraine and Russia as a Catholic lay missionary in the 1990s, I worked with many married Catholic priests in the Byzantine Rite. Even in the Latin rite, married ministers who come into full communion with the Catholic Church are sometimes ordained to the priesthood even though they have wives and children. (One such priest presided at my wedding.) So the next time someone asks you why the Catholic Church will not allow married priests, you can say: “The Church already does!”

+ Bishops, priests and deacons are not the ministers of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

In the Latin rite of the Catholic Church, the man and the woman getting married are the ministers of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, not the bishop, priest or deacon who is presiding at their wedding.

+ The Catholic Church is not a religion of guilt.

The stereotype that Catholicism centers on guilt is often repeated in films and television shows. But as any faithful Catholic knows, the very opposite is true. Our religion is about liberation from guilt and shame, thanks to the saving love of Jesus Christ. The sweet words of absolution that we hear from a bishop or priest in Confession show that we are actually a religion of true freedom: “God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

+ The Catholic Church is radically sex-positive.

The Catholic Church does not just teach that sex is good. The Church teaches that this gift from God is so good, it is holy. The reason the Church gets characterized as being “anti-sex,” of course, is that the Church accepts the game plan for human sexuality that God has revealed, namely, that sexual activity is reserved to married couples (a husband and wife). St. John Paul II made a groundbreaking contribution to the Church’s

appreciation of human sexuality in his “theology of the body.” I encourage you to Google “Theology of the Body Institute” to learn more about this saint’s life-changing insights on sex, gender and the human person.

+ Faith and science are meant to be friends, not enemies.

Many view science as the enemy of the Catholic faith but, in reality, modern empirical science can legitimately be viewed as a fruit of the Catholic culture from which it sprang. Regarding the relationship between faith and science, Vatican I teaches that “although faith is above reason, nevertheless, between faith and reason no true dissension can ever exist, since the same God, who reveals mysteries and infuses faith, has bestowed on the human soul the light of reason.” History is filled with great Catholic scientists like Father Georges Lemaître, a Jesuit priest and father of the big bang theory.

Modern science can sometimes even point to the miraculous. I find one scientific study to be especially significant for our times. Fifty years ago, Dr. Edoardo Linoli (a professor of anatomy, pathological histology, chemistry and clinical microscopy) was given permission to analyze the relics of a Eucharistic miracle in Lanciano, Italy. The relics are from the eighth century, when a monk who had doubts about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist was offering Mass. When he prayed the words of consecration (“this is my body” and “this is my blood”), the bread changed visibly into flesh and the wine changed visibly into blood. Dr. Linoli presented his findings on March 4, 1971. According to a 2005 ZENIT article: “His analysis revealed no traces of preservatives in the elements, meaning that the blood could not have been extracted from a corpse, because it would have been rapidly altered.” The scientist concluded that “the flesh and blood were of human origin.” The blood was of type AB and the flesh was cardiac tissue. (Recall our traditional devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus!)

God does not do magic tricks. When he performs a miracle, it is meant to help our faith. According to a 2019 Pew Research study, only one-third of U.S. Catholics agree with the Church’s teaching that the Eucharist is truly the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. Scientific testing such as that carried out by Dr. Linoli can actually point us to the truth of the Catholic doctrine that when Jesus commanded his followers to eat his body and drink his blood in John 6, he was not speaking in symbols. Rather, our Catholic faith holds that even though he is “disguised” as bread and wine in the Eucharist, it is truly the resurrected Lord! And in this Easter season, we should all exclaim “Alleluia!” and rejoice in the Holy Eucharist – the sublime gift born from the loving heart of Jesus. †



The Pfaff family includes Justin, 28; Shaelyn, 12; Devin, 19; father Jerry; Derek, 26; mother Lisa and Brandon, 22.

The Pfaff home is decorated with many family photos, including Derek in his high school football uniform, and religious art, such as the Divine Mercy.

Holy Name of Mary pastor Father George Amos laughs with Derek Pfaff. Father George anoints Derek before each of his surgeries.



Derek:

A Journey of Faith, Hope and Love

An inspiring story of life after attempted suicide

BY ERIN LOOBY CARLSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF SCHRIER

In the early morning hours of March 5, 2014, Ash Wednesday, Jerry and Lisa Pfaff couldn't find their son.

Derek, 19, had made plans to accompany his mom to Mass at their church, Our Lady of Lake Huron in Harbor Beach, and gone to bed. When Lisa woke up in the middle of the night, though, Derek's door was open ... and he wasn't there. Jerry, who was getting ready to leave for an early work shift, went outside.

"I heard the loudest scream that I have ever, ever heard in my life," Lisa said. "My husband just started yelling and screaming, 'No, Derek, no, no!' And he yelled, 'He shot himself.' It's a feeling that you just can't describe. The emotion, and what to do. Is he alive? Is he dead? Just the heartbreak. I just remember screaming over and over, and over again, and watching Jerry pull him and putting him in a vehicle to get him up to the hospital. I called 911 and just started yelling in the phone."

All-American kid

A standout football player on Harbor Beach Community High School's first and only state championship team, Derek was known by coaches and teachers alike for his drive and determination.

"When he was in middle school, Derek approached me ... and said, 'Hey, Coach, I want to work out,'" said Troy Schelke, Harbor Beach High School teacher and varsity football coach.

Coach Schelke would learn during those workouts that Derek was born with a clubfoot and had very little muscle on his leg. It was something Derek worked through pain to overcome, and something he kept hidden from opponents during his high school football career.

"(He) just inspired the heck out of me," Coach Schelke said. "He wasn't just an average player. He was a fantastic player, thousand-yard rusher on a state championship team."

Derek's work ethic was an inspiration to teachers in the classroom, too. High school math and science teacher Joe Terwillegar said, as a student, Derek preferred to use a formula rather than memorize the unit circle. "He went through and did every one and multiplied it by pi over 180. He got them all right. I still tell that story to my pre-calc classes. I'm like, 'I've had one student do it this way and he got them all right. It took 45 minutes, but he did it.'"

Lisa said Derek, who attended Our Lady of Lake Huron Catholic School through eighth grade, was also motivated by a deep faith.

"I remember when he was in second grade, and he was making his first Communion, and he made a little shrine in his closet," Lisa said. "He had holy water, and he had a cross, and he would go in there and pray."

Derek's golf coach witnessed that faith in action on a 90-degree day toward the end of an 18-hole event. The kids, he said, weren't keeping properly hydrated and a golfer from a rival school was getting sick.

"Derek went over and talked to him and said, 'You got this,'" said golf coach Dan Gonzales. "Derek carried his bag and his own bag for the last three holes so that the kid could finish and not be disqualified. I mean when I saw that ... you coach for the things that happen like that."

Derek's older brother and two younger brothers share stories, too: tales of rough-housing, dirt bike racing and eating pizza together.

"He was my best friend. He still is my best friend," said older brother Justin.



“Mom, what happened to me? Was I in an accident? ... Did I hurt anyone?”

- Questions Derek wrote to his mother while in the hospital

Derek Pfaff, 26, waits for a rare face transplant at home in Harbor Beach, Feb. 12. Seven years after attempting suicide, Derek hopes by sharing his story he can encourage others to seek the help they need.

Signs of stress

It wasn't until Derek's first year away at college that his parents grew concerned. A nursing student, Derek pressured himself to get perfect grades. He ended his first semester with a 4.0, and classes were getting harder.

He went skiing with friends over spring break in early March 2014, then came home to spend a few days.

“I was starting to worry about, ‘Gosh, he’s really putting a lot of pressure on himself,’” Lisa said.

Neither she nor Jerry ever could have imagined what Derek would do.

Then came the moment that would forever change their lives. Jerry found Derek in the snow — a shotgun lying nearby.

An urgent call for prayer

Lisa's first call was to 911. Her next call was to her parents, asking for their parish priest, Father Bill Spencer, to get to the hospital as quickly as possible to anoint

and bless Derek.

Father Bill recalled the night.

“He was knocking at the door, and he kept knocking,” Father Bill said. “I opened the door and I saw who it was ... and he told me about his grandson being down at the hospital.”

A few miles away, as the snow continued to fall, Jerry arrived at the Harbor Beach Community Hospital emergency room. He was met by surgeon Dr. Kelly O’ Sullivan.

“This is a bit graphic,” said Dr. O’ Sullivan. “It startled even me, and I’d been a surgeon in the ER for a while. When I looked down, his hair was hanging over his face, and when I looked at his face ... there was no face. There were just shards of skin hanging down.”

Derek was still breathing at the time, so she and a nurse brought him to the trauma bay.

“At that point, I watched him and he was no longer breathing. When someone stops breathing, you put a mask on their face and ... you force the air in through the bag, through

a mask,” Dr. O’Sullivan explained. “With Derek, you couldn’t do that, because there was nothing on which to create a seal.”

Divine intervention

“I was at the head of the bed and I stopped for a moment,” said Dr. O’ Sullivan. “I just said a little prayer: ‘Please just take my hands, please. This is more than I’ve ever done before. If this young man is supposed to live, take my hands and make this happen.’ Because I’d never intubated a patient where I had no landmarks by which to navigate. And I knew in that moment ... I have no doubt ... God took my hands and that went in first pass with no problem.”

The medical team began supplying oxygen. Derek’s lungs inflated and his heart started. There was hope.

“I thought, wow, there’s no doubt in my mind this young man’s meant to make it ... and we had just gotten some really big intervention,” Dr. O’Sullivan said.

Bracing for goodbye

Due to a snowstorm, Derek was transferred by ambulance to Flint’s Hurley Hospital, where he was pronounced brain-dead. A doctor discussed organ donation, which could save up to 17 lives, and the family said their goodbyes.

“We held Mom’s hand and she walked us to the room,” Brandon said. Lisa had instructed them to cover their eyes with their winter hats. “She put my hand on one of Derek’s hands and (Justin’s) on the other. And we both said our goodbyes, and we come from a religious family ... ‘Goodbye, Derek, I love you. I’ll see you again. This isn’t a true goodbye.’”

“I remember walking in, with my hat on, already crying and I peeked,” Justin said. “And then I just, I don’t know if the anger

came over, I kind of started yelling, like, 'Derek, what'd you do to us?'"

Carrying a cross

Derek was transferred to Henry Ford Hospital, where Lisa and Jerry thought he would be an organ donor. Derek went into surgery as soon as he arrived, and after several hours they heard some incredible and unexpected news: Derek did have a brain injury, but it was minimal.

Derek would live.

The path forward, however, would not be easy.

"Once I took a look at him in the intensive care unit and reviewed some of his tests, I had a very brief discussion with his parents," said Dr. Kenneth Moquin, a plastic surgeon at Henry Ford Hospital. "I also planted the seeds at that point in time that we're not entirely sure what path we're going to be taking yet, but we're going to figure it out."

"I remember Jerry and I just sitting in the waiting room," Lisa said. "We were just completely numb, and we just sat there and held each other, and prayed ... I remember saying to Jesus, 'Jesus, you carried a cross. Please help Derek carry his cross, because he's got such a long road ahead of him.'"

Comfort from a stranger

Derek's first surgery was the longest: 26 hours.

"We were just petrified, and it was in the middle of the night. I couldn't sleep. I was literally sitting in a chair, saying my rosary, and Jerry had fallen asleep. I was just alone and lost and kept praying," Lisa said.

A maintenance worker, who had been walking back and forth

through the night, approached Lisa and asked what had happened.

"I was honest. I said, 'My son is in a 26-hour surgery. He shot himself and he lived.' He said, 'I see you have a deep faith ... can I say a prayer with you?' And he sat with me and we said a prayer together. I was so thankful and grateful for just the peace that he brought me. He said, 'Never give up your faith.' He had recently lost his son in a car accident, and he said, 'The strength of God will get you through this.' I was so blessed to have him there, and we really never saw him again. ... He was there that night, and he was just an angel to me. His name was Joe."

Signs of movement ... and hope

About a week after surgery, Lisa noticed Derek moving his finger or toe when she talked.

"The doctors were elated that he actually had movement and could move his foot," Lisa said. "That was like, one of the first real signs that we have a chance. I thanked God at that moment, 'Please keep the miracles coming.'"

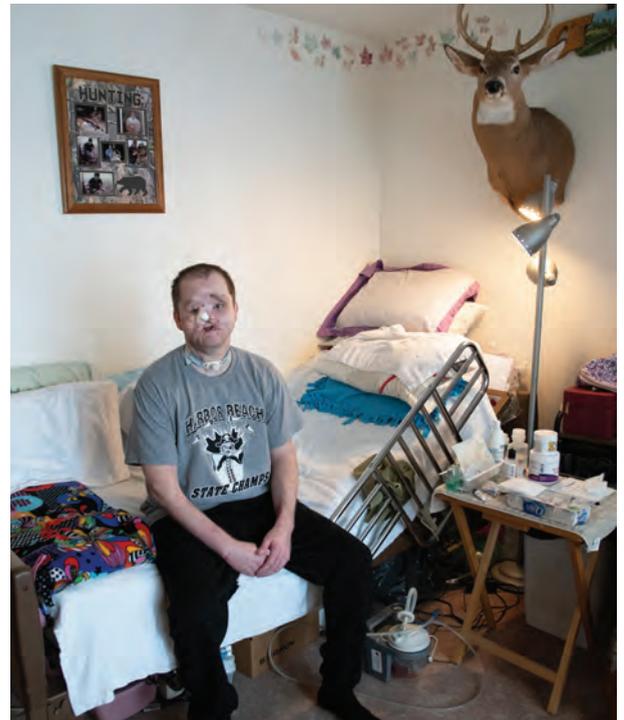
Grace, support and family

Derek continued to progress.

One day, he wrote a message on a clipboard to his mom with a question: "Mom, what happened to me? Was I in an accident?"

Lisa answered yes.

"The first thing he wrote, after everything he had been through, and through not being able to talk, and not being able to see, and not being able to walk, the first thing he wrote was, 'Did I hurt anyone? Did I hurt any of my friends? Was it a car



Derek Pfaff sits on the hospital bed in his home where his mother Lisa takes care of his medical needs.

accident?" Lisa pointed out. "That's who Derek is. He didn't even think about himself and why he couldn't talk. It was, 'Did I hurt someone?' And I told him, 'No.' I said, 'Honey, you didn't hurt anyone. You hurt yourself.' Then he wrote, 'What happened?' And I told him."

His response: "Mom, are you sure? I would never do that to myself. I would never do that."

"I didn't know what to say, and I just said, 'Derek, I haven't left your side.' I grabbed his hand and we held hands and he squeezed my hand," Lisa recalled. "He wrote down, 'Thank you, Mom. Thank you for being with me.' And I said, 'I'll never leave you.' I said, 'We will get through this.'"

The support of family and community through the years has made life as normal as possible.

If you are suffering from anxiety or depression, have suicidal thoughts or know someone who needs help, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800.273.8255. To connect with local resources available across the 11 counties of the Diocese of Saginaw, visit www.saginaw.org/suicide-prevention.



Use your smartphone camera to scan this code and watch Derek's FAITHvideo story.

To follow Derek's journey, visit www.saginaw.org/news or www.derekpfaff.com



Father George Amos, pastor of Holy Name of Mary Parish in Harbor Beach, prays with the Pfaff family: from left, Justin, 28, Devin, 19, Derek, 26, Brandon, 22 and their mother Lisa.

Jerry has taken on responsibilities at home when Lisa, who also works a full-time job, is with Derek through every surgery and hospital stay.

Father George Amos, pastor of Holy Name of Mary Parish (which includes Our Lady of Lake Huron Church) visits Derek to bless and anoint him before each surgery.

Derek is grateful for his support network.

“Thank you to everyone who has helped me,” he said. “I wouldn’t be where I am today without them.”

New beginnings

Seven years later, Derek— who once wore a jersey with a number seven on it— has great hope for the future.

He has fought to live through 58 surgeries, once coming very close to death.

The next step in Derek’s journey is a face transplant at Cleveland Clinic, where he has already been approved to be their fourth face transplant recipient. He has successfully undergone a series of rigorous psychological screenings and has an incredible network of support. Unfortunately, insurance will not cover the experimental

surgery. The family created a GoFundMe page, and they are praying for support as they share Derek’s story.

“As a parent, you only wish the best for your children,” Lisa said. “I just want the best for him ... to have a chance to help other people. To be able to go out in public and not have people stare at him, and point at him and call him names and say, ‘Did you see him? What happened to him?’ It rips my heart out when he hears those things. He’s such a giving, loving person who would do anything for anyone. I just want him to have this second chance.”

Derek hopes his story strengthens others to talk about their struggles before they harm themselves and to avoid the pain he has endured. The words “Derek’s Pain ‘4’ Purpose” are etched on bracelets worn by Derek’s family and friends.

“God is very much present in our lives,” Father George said. “In different ways, we are alive today for a reason. And every single day is an opportunity that God has given us to show his presence in our life by what we do, how we use our lives. Our lives are only

meaningful if we use it for others.”

Dr. Risal Djohan, a plastic surgeon at Cleveland Clinic and part of the team that successfully performed the first face transplant in the United States in 2008, believes this surgery will give Derek more confidence to publicly share his journey.

“Right now, perhaps he might be a little bit more shy to go out into the community because of his injury,” Dr. Djohan said. “What we have learned from our previous patients is that as they are more comfortable, they gain such confidence ... because that’s how we interact with society ... through our face. Not only how we present ourselves in the community, but also how we express ourselves. I was very, very pleasantly surprised about Derek’s spirit and also the support from his family ... we are very enthusiastic about the future outcome.”

“This year ... has just been the year that he’s really put himself out there,” Lisa said. “He’s willing to share what he looks like and what he’s been through to help others. Three, four years ago, we couldn’t have done this. I couldn’t have talked about it. I hear a song on the radio and I just start crying. I still do.”

Although there are still many challenges ahead, Lisa believes God is leading the way.

“I have faith that he’s going to be okay,” Lisa said. “He should have died multiple times through this, in surgeries, and just things that have went wrong the last seven years. He shouldn’t be here, and to hear him laugh with his brothers ... you just don’t need a lot of things in life, right? To hear him laugh and talk and be so positive and just wanting to get well ... it just means everything to me.”

“He’s happier now than he ever was,” Jerry said. “It’s unreal.”

With faith in God, faith in each other and in the support from their local community ... this is a story of transformation. †

Mary, our model for grace-filled motherhood

I think that if we asked any mother what she wanted most for her child, she would likely answer, “to be happy.” Mary, as Jesus’ mother and, by extension, our own mother, wants the same for each of us, with one addition – to be happy and holy. For us as Christians, happiness and holiness converge when we walk in the ways of our Lord. Mary is a model for how to do just that. This May, the best way to honor her is to follow the example she set for us.

One of Mary’s defining moments was when the angel Gabriel visited her, bearing God’s will for her to become the mother of Jesus. She gave a total “yes” to God during the Annunciation, even though she must have been frightened, uncertain and even doubtful. In responding to this *fiat*, Mary placed her complete trust in God.

This past year has taught us that life can change drastically and quickly, and though we may have our own set of plans, ultimately, we are not in control. Perhaps we can allow God’s plan to unfold for us by trusting him completely, as Mary did. Not knowing what the future would bring did not stop Mary from saying “yes” to the Lord. From her, we can learn to trust and have faith.

As a mother, Mary was full of unconditional love for her Son, supporting him in his teaching, preaching and even his ultimate sacrifice. Mary’s grace-filled motherhood shows us how to be filled with gratitude for all our motherly figures – both living and deceased. We can honor Mary and follow her example of love by genuinely thanking our mothers for their support of us. We can pray for our mothers, for expectant mothers, spiritual mothers, women longing to be mothers or have lost children and, in a special way, for those mothers contemplating an abortion – that they may have a change of heart. Additionally, just as Mary felt great pain in Jesus’ crucifixion, we can take this opportunity to attend to the hurts of our own hearts: if there is a rift or misunderstanding with your mother or if you are a mother who has a conflict with her child, ask Mary for her intercession as you try to repair that rift.

Mary, as our own mother, always hears our pleas and praise. She wants us to be happy and holy, and we can always turn to her for help. So, I invite us to pray the *Memorare* when we need her motherly support:



Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me.

Amen. †



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Pope Francis proclaimed a Year of Saint Joseph to run Dec. 8, 2020, through Dec. 8, 2021. To celebrate this special year, we have numerous resources available on our website (www.saginaw.org) about indulgences, local pilgrimage sites, family activities and a St. Joseph video series recorded by Bishop Gruss. In this issue of FAITH Saginaw, we are very pleased to share the inspiring vocation stories of two Sisters of St. Joseph who minister locally.

A PRAYER BEFORE RECEIVING FIRST HOLY COMMUNION LEADS TO *religious life*

Once upon a time, in 17th century France, a humble Jesuit priest, Jean-Pierre Medaille, envisioned a new form of religious life for women. He called it “The Little Design.” His inspiration emerged from his reflection on the Gospels and the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. At the time, the only form of religious life sanctioned by the Church for women was the monastic life, which originated in the third century. Monasticism consisted of living in cloister (apart from the world), wearing habits, taking solemn vows and committing one’s life to continuous prayer.

BY SISTER
CHRIS GRETKA,
CSJ

Medaille believed that some women were called to live among and minister to “the dear neighbor.” They would serve the Church, under the patronage of St. Joseph, take simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, dress like widows of the day and reflect the charism of unifying love: bringing all people into unity



Sister Chris Gretka currently serves as director of parish life for St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Bay City. Photo by Danielle McGrew Tenbusch.

with God and with one another. They would embrace a life of contemplation in action.

The Congregation of St. Joseph was founded in 1650, nearly 100 years after the Council of Trent. Religious wars resulted in many abandoned orphans and widows. Father Medaille met several faith-filled women willing to help alleviate the suffering around them and invited them to be part of "The Little Design." Over the years, the "Congregation of the Great Love of God" increased in number, became present throughout the world and encountered needs of all kinds, causing new ministries to evolve. After the Second Vatican Council, religious were encouraged to study the roots of their founders and "re-examine religious life." The Sisters of St. Joseph took that to heart.

In the 20th century, near Detroit, there lived a faith-filled family: Walter, Mary, three children: Tina, Cindy and Walter, and soon-to-be-born twins, Diana and David. April 22, 1956 was a special day. Tina would be receiving her first Holy Communion. She said a special prayer that day: "Jesus, if you want me to be a nun someday, I will do it for you."

Tina loved going to Christ the Good Shepherd Church. Sometimes, she prayed for unbelievable things: that her mom would have twins and that the next baby born would be a boy. Exactly one month after her First Communion, the twins were born. Three years later, her little brother Paul was born. She was so pleased God answered her prayers; she thought she was special. Tina soon discovered that God did not always say "yes." However, she still believed she was special in his eyes.

Soon she began praying, "God, what do you want of me? How can I best serve you?" Within her



prayer life, she experienced God's love and learned how to express that love for others. In high school, she began praying the Act of Love, which she still prays daily.

Tina deeply desired to use her gifts in the Church. As a child, she often "played Mass" with her siblings. She was disappointed that girls were not allowed to be altar servers, and she wondered how she could be part of Mass. In sixth grade, she joined the Special (all girls) Choir that sang at Mass every Sunday. In seventh grade, she began playing the organ, which she continued throughout high school and beyond. She became very involved in the Mass and found great joy in it.

Walter and Mary realized that their daughter wanted to enter the convent. Both were supportive, with one stipulation: that she complete high school before making a final decision. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Nazareth taught Tina at St. Francis Xavier High School. She noticed a delightful quality among these sisters. They were down-to-earth and very friendly. Tina was drawn to their charism and realized that God was calling her to religious life. She recalled her prayer of long ago, wondering whether the Holy Spirit had inspired it and if God was initiating the call to religious life even then.

I, Sister Chris, am Tina (my childhood nickname). I became

a postulant on Aug. 23, 1966, entered novitiate and received the habit in 1967, professed first vows on May 27, 1973 and final vows on Sept. 9, 1978.

St. Joseph has a special place in my heart. Humble person that he was, St. Joseph, as dreamer and contemplative, has inspired me. He has helped me appreciate that having my accomplishments recognized is not as significant as doing God's work, trusting my intuition is important, since God speaks through dreams. And by taking time for contemplative prayer, I can listen in stillness to God speaking to me. St. Joseph has motivated me to write and compose a song in his honor and to seek his intercession in prayer.

As a Sister of St. Joseph, I have served both in the Archdiocese of Detroit and the Diocese of Saginaw as music teacher, director of music and liturgy, pastoral administrator, associate for music and liturgy of the Diocese of Saginaw, instructor of sacraments of initiation in the lay ministry program, and presently, director of parish life at St. Catherine of Siena Parish. In preparation for those ministries, I received a bachelor of arts degree in music education and French from Nazareth College, a master of music degree in music education and organ from the University of Michigan and a master of arts degree in theology from the University of Notre Dame.

Sister Chris Gretka received her First Holy Communion on April 22, 1956. That day, she said a special prayer: "Jesus, if you want me to be a nun someday, I will do it for you." *Courtesy photo.*

A portrait of the Gretka family includes father Walter holding Cindy, Tina (now known as Sister Chris), mother Mary and Walter Jr. Twins Diana and David and youngest brother Paul were not yet born. *Courtesy photo.*

RELIGIOUS LIFE
AND MINISTRY
CAN BE SUMMED
UP WITH
ONE WORD: *love*

My vocation to religious life and parish ministry began in the fifth grade when my parents John and Edna Pewoski sent me to our parish school, St. Joseph School, in St. Johns. I prepared for Confirmation and found my prayer life deepening. I also was introduced to serving as a sacristan with my classmates by cleaning the sanctuary and sacristy and laying out the vestments for the next day's Mass.

BY SISTER JANET
PEWOSKI, CSJ

After Confirmation, I was asked how I might help, and I was given the name of a blind parishioner who resided at a local nursing home, so I would go to visit, write letters and eventually read aloud an entire book about the Titanic. I visited him regularly from fifth grade through high school, and wrote to him until he died during my first year of college.

During high school, I was active in church life. Catechism was held on Wednesday evenings and later shifted to Sunday evenings at parent homes. On Saturday mornings, I helped the fourth graders learn their prayers by breaking the prayers down into manageable sections to memorize and add on for the Acts of Faith, Hope and Love. I also attended and took a turn on the TEC retreat teams (Teens Encounter

Sister Janet
Pewoski sits
for a portrait at
age 2. *Courtesy
photo.*



Christ), where I met and befriended sisters of various religious orders. In the end, I joined the Sisters of St. Joseph, who had been my elementary school teachers, because I found them to be friendly, happy and holy.

I simultaneously began college and entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on August 21, 1968 and graduated

in 1972 from Nazareth College (affiliated with the Sisters of St. Joseph) with a bachelor of arts degree in English and psychology and a secondary teaching certificate. I then taught for a year at Monsignor Hackett High School in Kalamazoo. My novitiate year began in August 1973, and I professed first vows on Aug. 11, 1974, the Feast of St. Clare, and final vows on April 29, 1979, the Feast of St. Catherine of Siena.

Many of you may recall that Vatican II began in 1962 and ended 1965, so I entered amid the numerous changes and transitions going on within the Church and religious life at the time. Our sisters shifted

Sister Janet Pewoski currently serves as director of parish life for St. John Vianney Parish in Saginaw. Photo by Michelle Gombar.



from full-length habits to modified habits, then to no habit after we discovered that our original sisters were simply wearing the widow's garb of their time, which allowed single women to safely go out in public to minister. I remember being moved to tears by Pope St. John XXIII's efforts to call for unity among all Christians at the time, and I was also moved by the core Scripture that permeates the Sisters of St. Joseph based in John's Gospel: "That all may be one as you, Father, are in me and I in you."

My vocation and my mission are about knowing that I am loved by God and desiring to return that love to God and to his people, or as our founder Father Jean Pierre Medaille, S.J., would say "to the dear neighbor." Our sisters began as women who taught poor girls the faith and how to make lace to earn a living. They would take stock of the needs of the local area and divide and conquer trying to help where needed. Our ministries have expanded from care of orphans, the sick, teaching and social work to hospitals, schools, social justice and, in the words of Father Medaille, "all that a woman is capable of."

For the first part of my ministry, nearly 28 years, I taught in Catholic high schools in Flint and the Detroit suburbs. I gradually moved into campus ministry, retreats and pastoral ministry and faith formation roles at the parish. My subsequent degrees prepared me for this new ministry: master's in journalism and American literature from Ball State University, Indiana in 1986; a certificate in theological studies in spirituality and worship from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, California in 1991; a master's in Christian spirituality with a certificate in spiritual direction from Creighton University, Nebraska in 1996; and a master's

in theology from the University of Dayton, Ohio in 2003, as well as numerous certificates from Sacred Heart Seminary culminating in lay ecclesial certification.

The latter part of my ministry from 1991 to 2007 involved intermittent parish ministry while still working at the high school level. Then, Sister Chris Gretka contacted me to share that Bishop Robert Carlson was looking for pastoral administrators. I was in the middle of a dual contract at a high school and parish at the time, so I was not planning to move mid-year. I met with Bishop Carlson and he kept encouraging me to come. Though, right away, he remarked that he didn't mean to "steal the sheep" from Detroit. After talking with my congregational leaders, the principal, and making sure that I had all the service trips and retreats organized for the second semester, they agreed and supported my move.

I came to Saginaw in January 2007 and served at St. Matthew

Church, Zilwaukee through June 2013. From July 2013 to the present I have been at St. John Vianney, Saginaw. I oversee the preparation of the sacraments, liturgies and religious education, as well as help provide opportunities for parishioners to learn about and practice their faith.

In terms of Christ's mission, we're trying to proclaim the Word and invite others to practice the faith and come to the faith. We follow John 17, trying to let people know they are loved and they are one in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Religious life and ministry can be summed up with one word: love. †



Sister Janet Pewoski and Sister Chris Gretka renewed their vows and received a special blessing by Father Jim Bessert on the Feast of Saint Joseph, March 19, 2021, at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Bay City. *Courtesy photo.*

Sister Janet Pewoski brings the offertory gifts Aug. 11, 1974 during the Mass at which she professed her first vows. *Courtesy photo.*

Stimulated by the Holy Spirit of Love and receptive to those inspirations, the Sister of St. Joseph moves always towards profound love of God and love of neighbor, without distinction, from whom she does not separate herself and for whom, in the following of Christ, she works in order to achieve unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God directly in this apostolate and indirectly through works of charity in humility - the spirit of the Incarnate Word.

In sincere charity (*cordiale charité*) - the manner of St. Joseph, whose name she bears in an Ignatian-Salesian climate: that is, with an orientation towards excellence (*le dépassement, le plus*) tempered by gentleness (*douceur*), peace, joy.

[CONSENSUS STATEMENT OF THE FEDERATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH]

ROSEMARY SPRITZER

*In remembrance
of Our Lady*

Every time I smell fresh rosemary, I remember the day my husband handed me a bunch of sprigs from his then-newly-planted garden in our first home. We had only been married a few months, and it was an introduction of sorts to an herb I had never touched or cooked with before. I instantly fell in love with the woody aromatic.





Rosemary & Grapefruit Spritzer

- 1 cup water
- 1 cup sugar
- 3-4 sprigs rosemary (roughly torn)
- Pink grapefruit juice (100% juice, not from concentrate)
- Club soda

For the rosemary-infused simple syrup, bring the water and sugar to a boil in a small saucepan. Stir on medium to high heat until the sugar is completely dissolved. Throw in the torn sprigs of rosemary and place lid on pan. Allow to steep for about an hour or until cool. Using a sieve, strain the syrup in an airtight storage container. Store in fridge until chilled.

Fill each glass one third full of grapefruit juice. Add ice and 2-3 tablespoons of the simple syrup and give it a stir. Top off with club soda and garnish with a grapefruit wedge and sprig of rosemary.

Leftover simple syrup can be stored in the fridge for 2-3 weeks.

Interestingly enough, rosemary is universally symbolic for remembrance, dating back to ancient Greece. Perhaps, then, it's no surprise that my olfactory memory kicks in every time I smell it.

Rosemary is an evergreen shrub, and its narrow leaves resemble pine needles, but, with its blue-green color and blue flowers, it is in the mint family. It has been used throughout history for a variety of things. Early Greek scholars wore it around their heads to boost memory during examinations. Its other medicinal properties have been used to increase circulation, aid in digestion and boost the immune system, to name a few.

Dating back to the Middle Ages, it was a symbol of fidelity, love and remembrance. During a wedding ceremony, the bride would wear a headdress made of rosemary. The groom, and even the guests, would wear a sprig as well. At funeral ceremonies in many European countries, mourners would throw it into graves to keep alive their memories of those who have passed.

Many of these themes are mentioned in literature. William Shakespeare refers to it in many of his works. Most notably, in *Hamlet*,

Ophelia states, "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray you, love, remember."

Most significantly, this evergreen shrub is native to the Holy Land and is associated with the Blessed Mother. It is said that when the Holy Family escaped to Egypt, Mary placed her blue cloak on a white-blossomed rosemary bush while resting, and it turned the flowers blue. This connection lends itself to the age-old tradition of planting a Mary garden with rosemary and other Marian herbs and flowers.

Today, rosemary is beloved by chefs everywhere and used to flavor countless savory dishes. Even desserts and craft cocktails infused with rosemary have made their way into the culinary limelight. All in all, it is one of my favorite herbs and used in many of my own recipes, some of which I have shared in this magazine.

As we make our way through the month of May, we remember the Blessed Mother. May is *her* month! For those of us who keep gardens, we should remember her as we breathe in the sweet aromatic of this herb as it is planted. For those of us who don't keep a garden, we

can enjoy it in other ways. May the spritzer I share above be both a refreshing complement to a bright spring day and a remembrance of Our Lady! †



**MICHELLE
DIFRANCO**

is a designer and the busy mom of three children.



The Rose family— Justin, Evie, 9, Emalee and Norah, 4— live in Midland and attend Blessed Sacrament Parish.

At a time when people ached for human interactions stolen by COVID-19, Justin Rose of Midland provided comfort and cheer to many in the form of Lego-shaped waffles, third-grade drama and unshakable gratitude.

BY GREG
HELMMLING

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JEFF
SCHRIER

For a full year— March 14, 2020 to March 13, 2021— Justin wrote a daily summary of quarantine life with his wife Emalee and their daughters Evie, 9, and Norah, 4.

Though it began as a private journal, hundreds of followers eventually enjoyed the blog. For a time, they were shared online by Blessed Sacrament Parish, where he serves as high school and young adult ministries coordinator. The Saginaw Art Museum included his observations in “The Quarantine Chronicles” collection. There’s even talk of publishing a book featuring Justin’s posts.

“I never expected this to turn into a thing,” Justin said. “I thought it would be interesting to write stuff down about little things that are happening every day. Since a month before my oldest daughter was born, I’ve kept a journal that I will give to them some day, and I write in it every month or so. I figured I’d add this to the journal. You know, like, ‘Oh yeah, that was the year we had the pandemic. That was weird, right?’ When I started, I was writing maybe a sentence or two about something that happened that day.”

Day 1: *After the girls ate breakfast, Evie said, quite enthusiastically, “What are we going to do today?!” It begins.*

Evie was 8 years old and immersed in her elementary school social scene when the lockdown began, Justin said, and eventually the changes would become a struggle. At first, though, it was like an extended vacation— except for the nagging uncertainty.

Day 5: *After the 85th game of Candy Land with your 3-year-old, you start to question everything. Are we all stuck in a Cherry Pitfall? Someone, please, draw a blue card so we can all move on. Also, “The Next Right Thing” from Frozen II is devastatingly real for a children’s movie. “I’ll make a choice to hear that voice and do the next right thing.” Good advice for today or any day.*

At age 3, Norah never seemed bothered by spending so much time at home.

“It’s been like this for most of her active memory. This has become her new normal,” Justin said.

With *humor* and *reflection*, blog provides insight into family’s pandemic experience

Justin’s thoughts began as private journal entries, then became social media posts. As time went along, the numbers of his likes and followers grew, and so did the scope of his thoughts.

Day 10: *My grandmother was rushed to the hospital this morning because her assisted living center thought she had a stroke. She is responsive and alert this evening but held for observation. If this happened a week from now, she may not have had a bed in that hospital.*

Doctors determined Justin’s grandmother did not have a stroke, and she recovered.

Most of the entries were more light-hearted.

Day 14: *Saw an ad last night for a waffle maker that made LEGO shaped waffles. I showed my counterpart and said, “They finally did it. They Leggoed my Eggos.” My 20 minutes of laughter was not reciprocated. The smaller beings played together really well today, which is great because I have been finishing a couple projects for work basically since I got out of bed. Next project: Find a substitute way to say goodbye to my seniors in the event that schools are closed for the remainder of the school year. So, that really sucks.*

“(The blog) was just a way for people to see what was going on with us, as life kind of came to a halt for all of us,” Justin said. “There are things that happened literally every day that make me smile, especially with my kids. So, I’ve been doing my best to not necessarily pick and choose the best things from every day, but some of the more important things.”

Day 67: *Only one update for today. Multiple dams have broken around Midland County causing massive flooding and evacuations. It may be nearly impossible for some people to social distance and find safe shelter. Possibly 10s of thousands of people may be displaced or lose homes and property. Please pray for and help the people in our community in any way you can. We are safe and in no danger on the eastern edge of the city.*

As the pandemic revealed itself to be more stubborn than anyone feared, it changed the way all of us enjoyed traditional events.

Day 232: *Socially distanced Trunk-or-Treat. Mario Kart character costumes. Children in bed and parental units about to have some wine and watch Young Frankenstein. Happy Halloween!*

Day 246: *Today we celebrated the birth of the little one. She has given us much joy over the past 4 years. The offspring barged into our bedroom at 7:28 this morning by slamming open the door and yelling "Surprise!" I was in the midst of a dream about a cool dinosaur, so I wasn't super excited. They both jumped into bed and, after a solid 3 minutes of kicking and wiggling, they were both under the covers. I wished the little one happy birthday and suggested we celebrate with 20 minutes of silence while we closed our eyes. Nobody went for that option.*

By this time, Justin had committed to daily posts for a full year, and no longer. The announcement garnered kind feedback and comments from those who read the blog daily.

"(A former co-worker) said it was one of the few things that has made her laugh out loud every day," Justin said. "I think people can relate."

Through it all, Justin also noticed a few things about himself.

Day 335: *This year has taken a toll in many ways. We have been spared the worst. This morning, however, I noticed something interesting. I have a veritable forest of gray hairs coming in around my temples. A year ago, I had maybe three or four gray hairs on each side. I gladly accept my grays as a sign of maturity and grace. Now, I'm off to have a dinner of cheez wiz and ravioli straight from the can.*

Then came the day that it seemed would never arrive.

Day 365: One year...
The state of belief in which I find myself is the same as family, friends, acquaintances, and everyone in between. How did we get here?

... We celebrated this one-year anniversary as we do most Saturdays. We played a smorgasbord of games, laughed, ate more good food, went for a walk, laughed more, sang songs, read stories, and put the children to bed. It's idyllic, actually. Writing this brought some unexpected tears to my eyes.

... I do not know what I will learn when I look back on this year when I am 40 or 50 or 80. Maybe I will learn that I took this time for granted, or that I should have done some things differently. Maybe I will look back on this year that gave me the chance to slow down and record some of my thoughts for my kids and grandkids, and just be grateful. †

BRENDA PUNG RAU:
I've enjoyed following along with your year! I'm glad you let us all come along.

EM WOLFE:
I look forward to these every dang day. They're so funny. Thank you for putting a smile on my face everyday

GERALDINE CUSHMAN:
You're the Jim Gaffigan of Michigan!

HANNAH RICCI:
I think I laughed aloud at least three times while reading this.

HELEN MARIE SUTHERLAND:
Thank you for being a caring thoughtful father to those girls who we will look to in the future. Bless you!

SUE PARKER:
Thanks for sharing, Justin. I think there are a lot of parents realizing how precious this time is.

Responses from Justin's followers throughout the past year



GOLDEN GIRLS WITH GOLDEN HEARTS:

BY MARY BETH LOOBY

CCFMM's First Major Donors

They lived frugally, with a noble end goal in sight. Two of the three sisters never married. They saved and dreamed of how they could help the poor and the Catholic Church they loved. The Koncavich sisters, Stella, Mary and Helen, left a nearly \$1 million estate to the Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan (CCFMM) in 2010 after their deaths. The CCFMM Koncavich Fund was created to continue their legacy of faithful service.

Lovingly named the “Golden Girls” by fellow parishioners at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Bay City (Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish today), they were born in Mullan, Idaho, to Alexander and Agnes Koncavich. Mary was born in 1913; Helen, 1914; and Stella, 1917. The Koncavich sisters lived very modestly for decades so to donate the money they saved to serve the poor and needy in the Diocese of Saginaw.

Pat Ueberroth, an Our Lady of Czestochowa parishioner, remembers that any time an appeal was made for the missions or other worthy causes, the Koncavich donation was always on the large end. She adds that the three sisters were “funny, sweet and real ladies.”

According to Father Bill Rutkowski, who knew the sisters well, “Their Catholic faith was very serious to them—it was the heart of their lives.”

Mary, the oldest, was 89 when she died in 2002 after a long life of service. She was especially devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and was a member of the Rosary/Altar Sodality #6, St. Anne's Society and Golden Horizons.



“Mary was the quiet one, and she had a wonderful smile!” Father Bill notes.

Helen (Crevia), born a year after Mary, married Leo Maxwell Crevia on Sept. 14, 1935. They were married nearly 50 years until his 1985 death. They had no children. Helen died in 2007 at age 93 and was a member of the Legion of Mary, the Rosary/Altar Sodality #6 and St. Anne's Society. Like her sisters, Helen was very devoted to her church and faith, and she cherished the opportunity to take Communion to the homebound for many years.

Stella, who lived to age 91, died in 2008. Stella worked for the State of Michigan Employment Security Commission (MESC) for 48 years. She started there as a clerk/typist, but worked her way up to the position of manager for the MESC Bay City branch. Stella was well-liked and respected by her coworkers, and the Bay City MESC received numerous job placement awards from the State of Michigan while Stella was at the helm.

In 1968, Stella earned a master's degree in guidance and counseling from the University of Michigan by attending evening classes. A 2008 St. Stanislaus Kostka bulletin memorial announcement indicates Stella was also a commissioned lay minister, active with the Legion of Mary and visited the hospital and homebound with Holy Communion every Sunday.

Father Bill has fond memories of the Koncavich sisters.

“They were always together, and Stella was the leader of the ladies, their caretaker,” he recalls “If you saw them enter a room or church, they were always in the same order, with Stella leading. The girls were always all-smiles when you saw them. They were humble and drove a simple older car and lived in a simple ranch-style house in the south end of Bay City. The interior of the home was also simple, with older furniture that they were quite content with.”

Marge Kuczak remembers the Koncavich sisters' strong work ethic. She points out that they lived through the Great Depression, and thus took nothing for granted. They lived frugally, prayed the Rosary together and channeled their time and energies into service to St. Stan's church and the community.

Because of the Golden Girls' simple lifestyle, many were surprised when they left such a large bequest to CCFMM to help the poor and needy.

The CCFMM Koncavich Fund is a living legacy to these three special sisters. This fund fulfills the mission of the “Golden Girls” as it disperses money each year to multiple organizations, such as homeless shelters, food pantries and rescue missions.

“As that money is feeding and helping the poor, it's as if Stella, Helen and Mary are still here doing the work of the Lord,” said Father Bill Rutkowski. †

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**Call us at 989.797.6680 or
email at ccfmm@ccfmm.org**

Answering the call to serve as a lay minister

Is God calling you to do more? To let his light shine through you in service to others? To become a commissioned/missioned lay minister?

The Office of Lay Ministry is now accepting applications. The program, which begins in September, helps prepare Catholic adults for ministry by expanding their knowledge of Scripture and Catholic theology; helping them live their baptismal call in service to others; and strengthening their relationship with God through prayer, retreats and spiritual formation.

Those interested in exploring the diocesan Lay Ministry Formation Program should contact coordinator for Kellie Deming at layministry@dioceseofsaginaw.org or leave a message at 989.797.6609.

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

Diocese of Saginaw Priests' Retirement Fund collection beginning Father's Day weekend

The annual collection to support the retirement of priests in the Diocese of Saginaw will officially begin June 19 and 20. This is your opportunity to support the priests who have spent their lives dedicated to serving parishes and the families within them.

Our priests willingly offer a lifetime to their vocations and trust that God will provide to them in their later years.

When you donate to the Priests' Retirement Fund, your gift goes directly into the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw's priests' pension plan, where it is invested and held in a trust account. The pension plan provides for the monthly pension and medical benefits of our currently retired priests and helps fund the future retirement of our active priests.

There is a special envelope for this collection in your parish envelopes for June or you can donate online any time at www.saginaw.org/priestsretirement

If you have questions, please contact the Diocese Development Department at 989.797.6679 or development@dioceseofsaginaw.org

Reporting clergy abuse

If you are a victim of clergy abuse, the Diocese of Saginaw encourages you to contact local law enforcement to make a report, no matter when the abuse occurred. In addition, the Michigan Attorney General's Office can be contacted at its toll-free reporting hotline at 844.324.3374 (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) or by email at aginvestigations@michigan.gov.

After contacting authorities, you also may contact the Diocese of Saginaw's victim assistance coordinator at 989.797.6682 or victim.assistance@dioceseofsaginaw.org. The Victim Assistance Coordinator can assist victims in obtaining counseling services.

If you have cause to suspect a child or young person is being neglected or abused by anyone, immediately contact the Michigan Department of Human Service at their 24/7 hotline number: 855.444.3911. You may be held on a queue line; however, the call will eventually be connected.



faith *Saginaw*

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www.saginaw.org

Novena to the Holy Spirit

In preparation for the Solemnity of Pentecost on May 23, Bishop Robert Gruss invites you to pray the novena with him from

Friday, May 14 - Saturday, May 22

"Let us be united in praying for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on one another and on our entire Diocese of Saginaw." +Bishop Gruss

Find the prayers on
the diocesan website
www.saginaw.org



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