

CATHOLIC HERALD



▲ Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI blesses the Nativity scene at Mary Mother of the Church Pastoral Center on Friday, Dec. 17. (Photo by Larry Hanson)

Spike City

Dominican High School has banner volleyball season.

► PAGE 7

Events Calendar

Major events for 2022 are listed.

► PAGE 8

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- March 25 (Lent)
- April 8 (Lent)
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PUBLISHER

Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKi

EDITORIAL

Administration

Jerry Topczewski • (414) 769-3590
topczewskij@archmil.org

Communication Director

Sandra Peterson • (414) 769-3461
petersons@archmil.org

Associate Editor

Larry Hanson • (414) 769-3466
hansonl@archmil.org

Staff Writer

Colleen Jurkiewicz
jurkiew.c@gmail.com

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC MEDIA APOSTOLATE

Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKi

Christopher P. Brown

Jeff Jackson

Mark Sabljak

Dr. William Thorn

Jerry Topczewski

ADVERTISING

Display Sales:

Tim Kisting • kistingt@archmil.org • (414) 769-3477

Classified Advertising: (414) 769-3464

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Production Manager

John Tegatz • (414) 769-3479 • tegatzj@archmil.org

OFFICE

Finance/Business Manager

Richard Parduhn • 414-769-3467 • parduhn@archmil.org

Circulation Coordinator

Michelle Cummings • (414) 769-3464
cummingm@archmil.org

General Information

Office: 3501 S. Lake Dr., St. Francis, WI 53235-0913
(414) 769-3464 • Fax: (414) 769-3468

Mailing: P.O. Box 070913, Milwaukee, WI 53207-0913

Web site: www.catholicerald.org

E-mail: catholicerald@archmil.org

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'The Gift of Sunday' is the Perfect Present

This time of the year, we often hear people say, "Wouldn't it be nice if we could keep the spirit of Christmas alive all year long? Why can't we all just live each day as if it was Christmas?" Those thoughts were in the back of my mind as I was preparing to preach early this month at one of the Advent Missions, which was part of "The Gift of Sunday" initiative, our archdiocesan effort to renew devotion to the Eucharist and dedication to the celebration of the Mass.

And, what struck me in my preparation for the Mission on the Eucharist in the beginning of the season of preparation for Christmas was that it is precisely in the celebration of the Mass that we encounter the very things that we cherish about our commemoration of the Birth of Christ. Thus, it would seem to reason that if we would immerse ourselves more intensely in the Eucharist, then many of the things we value about Christmas might robustly infuse our hearts and our lives. It might perpetuate the spirit all year long. So, in that very spirit, I would like to offer reflections on five elements shared by both the celebrations of the Nativity and the Mass.

One of the most special things we love about Christmas – especially as kids – are Christmas presents. Think about it. What child doesn't love that part of Christmas? When we are young, we not only wish for Christmas presents and ask Santa Claus for Christmas presents, we even dream about Christmas presents.

Which is why Christmas can be found in "The Gift of Sunday," for there, in the celebration of the Mass, we are blessed by the most heart-felt gift any of us will ever receive. In the gift of the Eucharist, we receive the gift of Salvation. For, when we celebrate the Mass, through



HERALD of HOPE

BISHOP JEFFREY R. HAINES

the grace and goodness of God, the commemoration of the Lord's Supper makes present the very Sacrifice of Christ that he offers to us for our Salvation. The very offer of eternal life with God is held out to us – if we open our hearts and pledge our "Amen" of affirmation and commitment. When you come right down to it, one really cannot imagine anything that is more imbued with the meaning of Christmas than a gift like that.

Another of the things we love about Christmas is that every family has some form of a special meal – a Christmas meal – filled with particular delicacies and time-honored ways of preparing and serving them, often in a setting that complements the uniqueness of the dinner. Quite often, the nature of these meals is such that no one dares change the format or the menu of that repast. The main course, the side dishes and the desserts better be what they always are. After all, it is a Tradition. There is something about honoring the Tradition that captures what is meaningful and what is important about the occasion.

That same sense of importance captured in the dignity of a Tradition-based Christmas meal is found in the celebration of the Eucharist. Think of the time-honored elements of that Holy Meal. The vessels that hold the food and drink during the Mass are made

of precious metals, and the actions of presenting and serving the meal are choreographed with refined and reverent gestures. In addition, the menu of the special hosts and the Sacramental wine is never compromised, as its meaning and symbolism are not only historic but profoundly theological in nature. The setting for the meal is also very elegant, for the table upon which it is served is not merely functional but crafted as a work of art. It is an altar of great beauty, surrounded by candelabra and candles, radiant in light and splendor. This setting, too, bespeaks the point that this is no ordinary meal. In fact, the setting, serving and style of the meal honors Traditions that convey that something of great dignity, meaning and importance is being commemorated in the Eucharistic meal. Its exquisite nature is meant to reveal something that is Sacred. Only "such a meal" is suitable for the very manifestation of the Real Presence of the Lord.

Many people will tell you that one of the best things about Christmas is the opportunity it provides to bring our loved ones together. That is why most people speak of Christmas as a "family" holiday. Quite often, people come from near and far for the meal. And, nowadays, with the blessing of electronic devices, families can gather even though they are miles apart. But, another great thing about Christmas is the fact that we often include in our gatherings people we consider to be family, even though we are not related by blood or marriage. In some gatherings, there are elderly neighbors whose loved ones have passed, co-workers from the office who have no place to go or college classmates whose hometowns are too far away to travel. During the holidays, the doors

► READ MORE PAGE 16

Afghan Refugees Aided by Catholic Charities

Since the arrival of nearly 13,000 Afghan refugees at Fort McCoy, the five Wisconsin Catholic Charities chapters have been assisting with the physical, social and emotional needs of the newcomers who are guests at the base. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services, at the request of the U.S. State Department, is coordinating this historic statewide collaboration of Catholic partners to welcome the stranger.

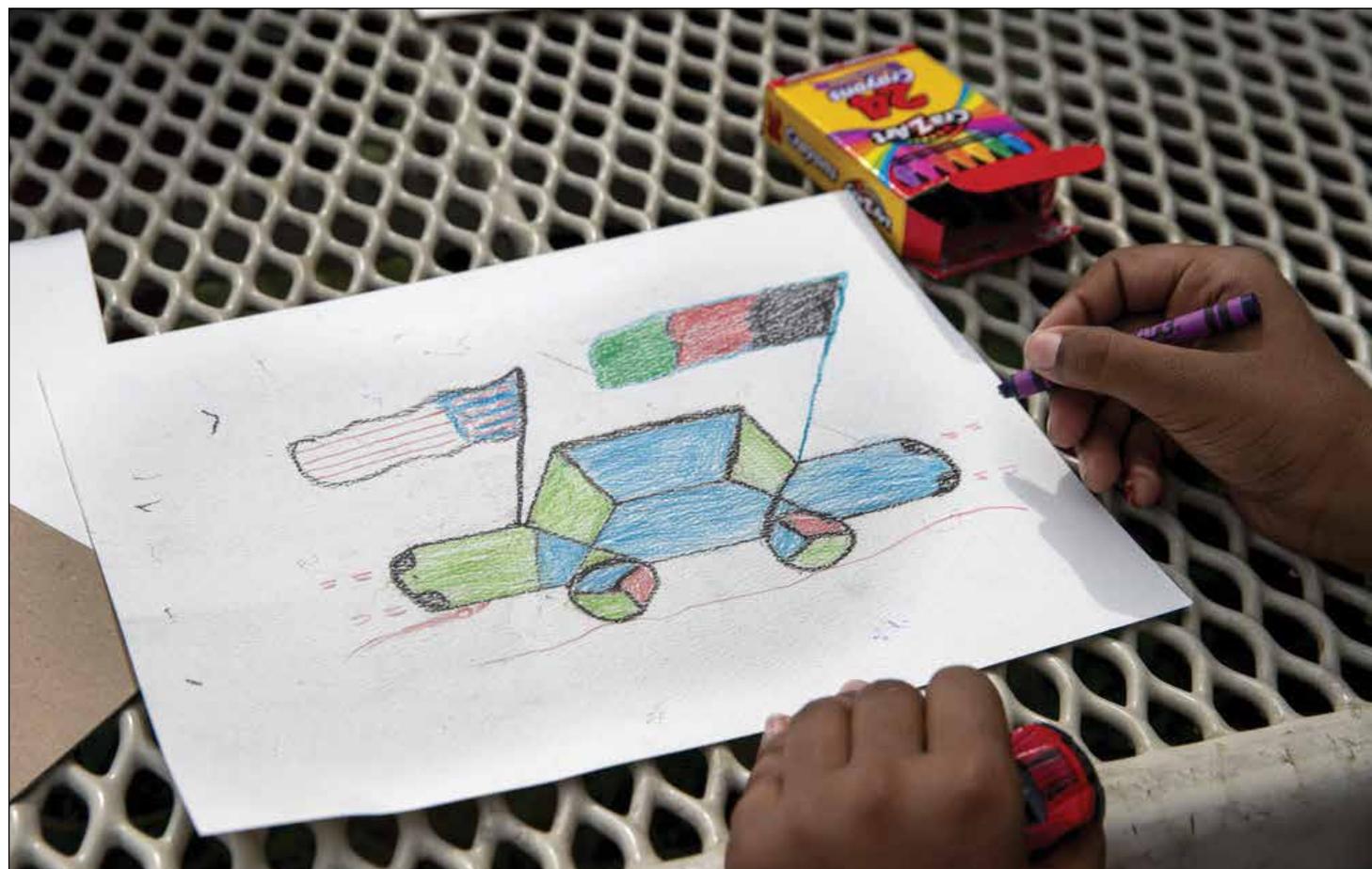
Catholic Charities, locally and across the state, are the primary providers of volunteers on base and are responsible for facilitating donations of material items. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse is providing daily coordination of social, recreation and wellness activities for families.

It is anticipated that the remaining 7,000 Afghan refugees temporarily housed by the Department of Defense will be resettled by early spring. As many as 200-400 Afghan refugees will be resettled in Wisconsin through various resettlement agencies, including Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Green Bay.

This interagency effort was buoyed by an initial \$30,000 donation from the Wisconsin Catholic bishops and supported by the efforts of parishes throughout the state.

“Even more than material goods, these men, women and children need to find friendship and security,” wrote the bishops of Wisconsin in a joint statement issued Sept. 17. “They need to be shown that there is great hope for their futures and that their presence is welcome in our beautiful state. Having endured enormous trauma, they need time and support to heal.”

Creating an enriching social structure on the base is a critical part of Catholic



▲ Catholic Charities has been assisting with settling Afghan refugees at Fort McCoy since they began arriving in Wisconsin. (Photograph appears courtesy of U.S. DoD. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.)

Charities' role. Volunteers provide refugees with a welcoming atmosphere, a break from the confines of temporary housing and relief from their difficult journey. Among the services provided are on-base legal assistance, social engagement, and learning and recreation centers. The women's centers provide a quiet and clean place for mothers to bond and play with their children and develop friendships. The children's area is a place for children to gather and create arts and craft projects, build puzzles, play games and be social. Volunteers keep the centers running safely and smoothly.

“I can't believe I just finished day four. The time is flying. Overall, it's been an

amazing, inspiring, heartwarming and at times heartbreaking and chaotic experience,” said Alane, a volunteer through Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Working with children in the recreation area, she said, “I can only imagine what these kids have gone through, and I am awed by how strong and resilient they are.”

Jay Sugar, former parish relations coordinator for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee said, “I can't think of a group of people more deserving of our comfort (and) our love. When you meet these individuals, you realize people are the same the world over.”

“Catholic Charities is committed to the needs of the Afghan refugees

for as long as they are here in our state,” said Ricardo Cisneros, chief operating officer for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. “We will continue to provide support for community integration for Afghans who are resettled in the Milwaukee area. Local volunteers from parishes and the community are essential to help refugees with a successful transition.”

Andrew Ruesch is coordinating volunteers and support to assist Afghan refugees through Catholic Charities. To learn more about volunteering or to make a financial donation, visit cmcke.org/Catholic-Charities/Support-for-Afghan-Refugees.

Catholic Community Foundation Makes Wishes Come True

KATE KELLEHER JUNK
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

To celebrate its 20th anniversary, The Catholic Community Foundation looked to do a little more this year.

Parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Milwaukee were encouraged to “wish big” and “ask for anything,” specifically for items that fell outside the scope of their regular budgets, for one of five \$20,000 “Power of the Wish” awards.

Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI and past and present Foundation board members met at the University Club on Tuesday, Dec. 7, not only to celebrate the anniversary but to present the winners.

Forty-one parishes submitted wishes, and Foundation President Mary Ellen Markowski described how a diligent award committee read the proposals “blindly,” with all identifying information of the parishes redacted.

The Catholic Community Foundation has awarded \$14 million in grants since its inception and, in the last fiscal year, awarded \$1.8 million in grants for programs and projects that support four priorities. Those priorities are education (for students in Catholic schools and religious programs in kindergarten through 12th grade); community building (to strengthen families, parishes and those suffering from poverty, discrimination and violence); leadership development (forming leaders for parishes, schools and agencies that help advance the Church); and health care (for the underserved in Milwaukee).

Recipients of the \$20,000 “Power of the Wish” awards were:

St. Frances Cabrini, West Bend: Though over a dozen responses were submitted to Fr. Nathan Reesman, the parish ultimately put forward a request for a new outdoor play set for the Little Saints Early Learning Center. Realizing both their “call to employ these blessings to do God’s will as Mother Cabrini did in her ministry” and the need for quality early childhood care in their community, the parish converted their old convent to a site for children from ages 6 weeks to 3 years.

St. Catherine of Siena, Ripon: For several years, vandalism and property damage have been observed at the parish. With the grant funds, St. Catherine of



▲ Fr. Davies Edassery, S.A.C., from St. Catherine of Siena Congregation in Ripon receives his \$20,000 Power of the Wish award from The Catholic Community Foundation President Mary Ellen Markowski. (Photo by Tim Townsend)

Siena is able to take a proactive step: installing a camera system to both deter theft and assist the police and insurance companies in the event of it occurring.

St. Charles Borromeo, Milwaukee: The grant committee noted that this parish’s wish extends beyond its parishioners and into the community at large: by replacing and updating the kitchen and parish hall, the hot lunch and meal pick-up site will be expanded, helping others in need.

St. Margaret Mary Parish, Milwaukee: Replacing a condemned playground with their grant funds will enable the parish to foster community for the parish, school and local community, with the hope of attracting more children and families to the parish.

St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Milwaukee: With their funds, the Central City Youth Choir will be resurrected. This youth program not only fosters greater collaboration across the city but forms young people into ambassadors of faith in the greater community.

In the closing remarks, Archbishop ListECKI encouraged those in attendance to “own our faith through our

charitable acts,” and shared the prayer for the mission of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, which says, in part: “we humbly pray for strength and fortitude to follow your great commission: to go and make disciples of all people, living our faith through word and deed.”

The Catholic Community Foundation and its work throughout the archdiocese are made possible through the generosity of donors and the thoughtful stewardship of those who manage its portfolio, namely the Foundation’s investment committee and investment consulting firm Crewcial Partners. Mike Miller, CIO of Crewcial Partners, was in attendance and spoke of the “awesome responsibility” involved. He proudly announced that since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the portfolio has gone from \$107 million to \$162 million, a 51 percent increase from donor support and market performance. As a perpetual endowment, the Foundation seeks ongoing growth to meet ever-growing needs.

If you are looking for more information on how you can provide for your community, visit legaciesoffaith.org.

Sister Finds Joy in Baking at Age 98

Sr. Lenore Steilen of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi spends much of her time in November over a mixing bowl, creating her delicious Pecan Fingers for the holidays. Over the years, the treats have graced the Christmas dessert tables of countless numbers of families who have purchased them during cookie sale fundraisers at the congregation's motherhouse in St. Francis.

"People are so fond of the pecan fingers," she said recently as she mixed up a batch. "They always tell me they are so good, they melt in your mouth."

The active 98-year-old baker makes approximately 40 dozen each holiday season.

Sr. Lenore's talent for baking goes back to childhood, when she learned how to bake while growing up on a farm in South Dakota. She credits her mother for teaching her how to make cookies from scratch, and always by hand. She learned how to make a variety of baked goods, including homemade donuts.

Sr. Lenore discovered the recipe for the sought-after

Pecan Fingers seven years ago while working in the kitchen at St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care in St. Francis, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. One day, there was a surplus of powdered sugar in the kitchen, and Sr. Lenore was asked to find a use for it.

She began looking through cookbooks and found the Pecan Fingers in Taste of Home's "Best of Country Cookies." She tried the recipe, and it's been a favorite ever since. She says one of the secrets to baking the cookies just right is to chop the pecans by hand for the desired consistency. As a general rule, she encourages novice bakers to "know your ingredients and always carefully read directions."

While at St. Ann's, Sr. Lenore was also known for her scones. Her specialties were almond, lemon, rhubarb raspberry and cherry nut.

These days, Sr. Lenore bakes primarily during the holidays. She is an active resident of Elizabeth Hall, a wing of St. Francis Convent on Lake Drive in St. Francis.



▲ Sr. Lenore Steilen with a tray of her Pecan Fingers cookies. (Photo courtesy of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi)

Join the Office for World Mission on a Lenten Pilgrimage to La Sagrada Familia Parish in the Dominican Republic

March 8-15, 2022

As part of the celebration of our 40th Anniversary of being United at the Heart in Faith and Action, join us on a pilgrimage to learn about our connection with our sisters and brothers in our sister parish in the Dominican Republic

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Dominican Has Stellar Volleyball Campaign

LARRY HANSON
CATHOLIC HERALD STAFF

It was a historic volleyball season at Dominican High School this fall.

The girls team won its first conference title since 1997, knocking off a perennial state power to do it, and the boys team won its first conference championship, in just its fifth season in existence. Morgan Theiler for the girls team and Barry Applewhite of the boys team were also named conference players of the year for the Knights.

For Theiler, she had been cognizant of the drought, especially since coach Jimmy Burg took over the program before the 2020 season.

“I think I’ve always known it’s been a while,” said Theiler, who was one of just two seniors on the team. “My junior year is when we really realized it’s been this long. When we got our new coach, he said winning conference is a big thing.”

Added Burg: “Many of our older and advanced players have been on varsity for two or three years already, so it’s something that has been on their mind and targeted for a while. The girls worked hard at many different things with their skills physically, mentally and emotionally to be able to achieve the championship.”

Theiler said the moment winning the conference moved something that was a goal on the team’s white board to something realistic and tangible was when the Knights came back from down 2-0 to defeat Burlington Catholic Central in five sets. Part of the Knights’ drought has been the fact they have been in the same conference as Catholic Central, which has won seven state championships since 2006.

“I think it was at that point that we knew,” Theiler said. “BCC’s such a strong team every single year. They’ve won state numerous times. That was a team that we never beat until my senior year, so once we beat them, I think our confidence level was at an all-time high. We had a lot of momentum going forward after that game.”

Making sure the next drought doesn’t reach 24 years is something Theiler thinks this year’s underclassmen will be able to achieve.

Burg, who stepped down as coach of the Knights at the end of the season, also thinks it’s possible, especially



▲ Morgan Theiler (left) and Barry Applewhite were conference players of the year for Dominican High School’s volleyball teams, which both won conference titles this fall. (Photo by Larry Hanson)

in a conference that featured numerous senior starters across the various teams.

“This team definitely has the opportunity to do great things next year,” Burg said. “They have leaders in the program who are ready to step up and take bigger roles on and off the court. Everyone on the team will have to be ready to put the work in to continue their growth and change. Dominican plays in a difficult volleyball conference, so improvement is going to be needed to continue a high level of success.”

For Mark Rybakowicz, he stepped in as head coach of the boys program in its second season — 2018 — and saw the team steadily rise throughout the years.

“It’s maybe even easier because there’s no established format, there’s no established family,” Rybakowicz said.

He said the key to the growth of the program, which jumped from third in the conference in 2020 to first this season, can be attributed to a group of athletic players who developed quickly and bought into the program. The Knights got all the way to sectional finals where they lost to eventual state champion Marquette.

“I was fortunate enough to be here when I was and ride that four years to what we achieved this year,” Rybakowicz said. “From the beginning, I just wanted to grow every year and we accomplished that.”

Applewhite said the moment he knew for sure the team could achieve great success was when the Knights came back from down 2-1 to defeat Whitnall early in the season.

“I thought our team showed a lot of resilience coming back and winning in five,” Applewhite said. “I played with all of those seniors for four years. You create a bond throughout those four years, both on the court and off the court, so we knew each other’s playing styles, and we knew we could lead and help each other on the court.”

The success of the Knights has Rybakowicz thinking big — perhaps going to state and winning a title eventually.

“If I didn’t think that we could make it to state and win state someday, I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing,” Rybakowicz said.

2022 Archdiocese of Milwaukee Major Events Calendar

JANUARY

- 1 - Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
- 1 - New Year's Day
- 15 - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Service
- 17 - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 21 - Saint Francis de Sales Seminary Patronal Feast Day
- 21-23 - Winter Weekend Retreat for Young Adults
- 22 - Archdiocesan Respect Life Mass
- 30 - Feb. 5 - Catholic Schools Week

FEBRUARY

- 19 - Devoted Marriage Retreat
- 21 - Presidents' Day

MARCH

- 2 - Ash Wednesday
- 6 - Rite of Election
- 10 - Catholic Schools Dinner
- 13 - Rite of Election
- 14 - Catholic Charities Lenten Lunch - Pewaukee
- 18 - Arise Worship Night
- 18 - Wisconsin Catholic Youth Rally (Catholic School Edition)
- 19 - Wisconsin Catholic Youth Rally (High School and Middle School)
- 22 - Catholic Charities Lenten Lunch - Milwaukee
- 23 - The Gift of Sunday Lenten Mission
- 26 - Men of Christ Conference
- 26 - Archdiocese of Milwaukee's Campanile Dinner
- 26 - Encuentro (Hispanic Men Encounter)
- 28 - Catholic Charities Lenten Lunch - Sheboygan
- 31 - Archbishop's Pallium Lecture

APRIL

- 5 - Pray, Reconcile, Rejoice - 12 Hours of Reconciliation
- 5 - Catholic Charities Lenten Lunch - Kenosha
- 7-9 - Healing the Whole Person Conference
- 10 - Palm Sunday
- 12 - Chrism Mass



▲ *Easter Sunday will be on April 17 in 2022. (Getty Images photo)*

- 14 - Holy Thursday
- 15 - Good Friday
- 16 - Easter Vigil
- 17 - Easter Sunday
- 23 - Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate
- 23 - Celebration of Catholic Scouting
- 30 - Called and Gifted Workshop

MAY

- 2-4 - Spring Assembly of Priests
- 8 - Mother's Day
- 9 - Blue Mass for those in Law Enforcement
- 21 - Ordination to the Priesthood
- 26 - Ascension of the Lord
- 30 - Memorial Day

JUNE

- 4 - Feast of the Ugandan Martyrs and African Saints
- 5 - Pentecost Sunday
- 13 - Pallium Scholarship Golf Outing and Benefit
- 19 - Father's Day
- 24 - World Day of Prayer for Priests

JULY

- 4 - Independence Day
- 16 - Arise Family Day

AUGUST

- 15 - Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 26-27 - Catechetical Conference

SEPTEMBER

- 5 - Labor Day
- 10 - Ordination to Permanent Diaconate
- 22 - Archdiocesan Vatican II Awards
- 24 - Hispanic Ministry Conference

OCTOBER

- 2 - Asian-Pacific Islander Unity Mass
- 3 - Red Mass - St. Thomas More Society
- 7 - Saint Francis de Sales Seminary Dinner
- 8 - Sal Y Luz Hispanic Youth Encuentro
- 15 - Catholic Schools Walk
- 18 - White Mass for those who work in Healthcare
- 23 - World Mission Sunday

NOVEMBER

- 1 - All Saints Day
- 2 - All Souls Day
- 5 - Women of Christ
- 5 - Gema de Dios
- 6-12 - Vocation Awareness Week
- 12 - Inheritance Young Adult Conference
- 24 - Thanksgiving Day
- 27 - First Sunday of Advent

DECEMBER

- 8 - Feast of the Immaculate Conception
- 24 - Christmas Eve
- 25 - Christmas Day
- 31 - New Year's Eve

Note: This is a sampling of events around the Archdiocese for 2022. Dates are subject to change.



Obituaries

Dcn. Richard J. Govek

Dcn. Richard J. Govek died Nov. 22, 2021. Dcn. Govek was born June 11, 1934, in Sheboygan. He graduated from Sheboygan Central High in 1952. He attended Marquette (1952-54), studying engineering, and then finished his college studies at UW-Milwaukee (1959-60), studying accounting. He served his country in the U.S. Army, (1957-59), with an honorable discharge as a Spec 5. He began his work career as a clerk for the FBI (1952-62), but his true professional career was as a material manager for Wisconsin Electric from 1962-94.

Dcn. Govek married the love of his life, Dorothy, on Oct. 20, 1956, at Ss. Cyril and Methodius Parish in Sheboygan. They had seven children: Elizabeth (Rollin) Kring, Margaret (Ron) Wollner, Andrew (Margaret), Richard (Carrie), Edward (Janice), Amy (Rick) Green, and Joanne (Kraig) Sadownikow. He is also survived by 29 grandchildren and four great grandchildren. His beloved Dorothy died Dec. 7, 2020.

Dcn. Govek began his diaconate formation in 1988 at Saint Francis de Sales Seminary. He was ordained a permanent deacon June 13, 1992, by Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, O.S.B., in Mater Christi Chapel. Dcn. Govek was assigned to his home parish, St. Joseph, Grafton, where he served until his official retirement June 30, 2009. In addition to the traditional liturgical services, Dcn. Govek's true passion was jail ministry. Prior to ordination, he was serving at the Ozaukee County Jail, but after ordination, he served 20-40 hours per month there. He also served the deacon community as a district rep and a member of the Deacon Council.

Funeral services for Dcn. Govek occurred Saturday, Nov. 27, 2021. There was a visitation and Mass of Christian Burial

at St. Joseph Parish, Grafton. Fr. Steve Lampe, assisting priest and a former pastor at St. Joseph Parish, was the presider and the homilist. The Deacon of the Word was Dcn. Paul Govek, Dcn. Dick's brother from Oklahoma, while the Deacon of the Altar was Dcn. Al Lazaga from St. Joseph's and an ordination classmate of Dcn. Govek. Bishop James T. Schuerman offered the Final Commendation.

Dcn. Richard Hiller

Dcn. Richard D. Hiller died Nov. 29, 2021. Dcn. Hiller was born Feb. 18, 1936, in Beaver Dam. He graduated from Hartford Union High School in 1955. He attended some college at St. Lawrence Seminary from 1955-56 and also spent some time as a Camillian brother. Professionally, he was employed in Hartford area nursing and extended care facilities for more than 30 years. He worked as an orderly, an aide in nursing, dietary and social work, and eventually as a certified Catholic chaplain.

Dcn. Hiller never married. He lived in the family home in Hartford for his whole life. He is survived by four sisters and a brother, multiple in-laws, and numerous nieces and nephews.

He began his diaconate formation in 1974 at Saint Francis de Sales Seminary. He was ordained a permanent deacon Dec. 26, 1975, by Archbishop William E. Cousins at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist as part of Milwaukee's first class of permanent deacons. He was assigned to his home parish, St. Kilian, Hartford, where he served until his retirement from covenanted diaconal service Dec. 2, 1994. He continued to serve, as his health allowed, even after retirement. In addition to normal liturgical service, Dcn. Hiller's passion was services to the elderly, those in long term care and the homebound. He

completed training as a chaplain and was certified by the United States Catholic Conference in March 1976.

Funeral services for Dcn. Hiller were held Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2021. There was a visitation at the Shimon Funeral Home in Hartford, followed by the Mass of Christian Burial at St. Kilian Parish, Hartford. Interment followed the Mass at the St. Kilian Cemetery.

Sr. Ruth Poochigian, O.P.

Sr. Ruth Poochigian, O.P., died Oct. 22, 2021, at St. Elizabeth Manor, Footville. Natural burial took place Oct. 25 in the Motherhouse Cemetery, Sinsinawa. The funeral Mass was held at the motherhouse, Sinsinawa, on Oct. 27.

Sr. Ruth made her first profession as a Dominican Sister of Sinsinawa on Dec. 16, 1972, and her perpetual profession April 3, 1976. She taught for 13 years and ministered in multiple ways with adult faith formation for 19 years. Sr. Ruth served as fundraiser and public relations staff for two years, chaplain for two years and pastoral minister for eight years. She served in California, Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa.

In the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Sr. Ruth lived in Milwaukee and served as promoter of spirituality and study for the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, 1993-98; consultant for parishes with the archdiocese, 1998-2000; and as an adult faith formation consultant, 2001.

Sr. Ruth was born Feb. 23, 1946, in Los Angeles, the daughter of Paul and Dorothy (Shamdanjian) Poochigian. Her parents and a sister, Janice Oetken, preceded her in death. She is survived by a brother, Earnest Poochigian; a niece; a nephew; and her Dominican Sisters, with whom she shared 48 years of religious life.

Sr. Betty Ann "Angela" Heegeman, O.P.

Sr. Betty Ann Heegeman, O.P., 79, passed away at Ascension All Saints Hospital Racine on Oct. 30, 2021.

Betty Ann was born March 29, 1942, to Lawrence A. and Gladys (née Hove) Heegeman in Appleton. On Sept. 11, 1960, she joined the Racine Dominicans and at her reception in 1961, she was given the religious name Sr. Angela. She professed her first vows in 1963 and her final vows in 1969. In 1968, she returned to using her baptismal name, Betty Ann.

Sr. Betty Ann spent many years in service to others as a teacher and principal. She began her ministry in 1965 at St. Rita. Other places in Wisconsin where she served were St. Mary, Kenosha; St. John, Little Chute; the Chilton Catholic School System, Chilton; and Ss. Peter and Paul, Keil. From 2000-09 she worked as an advocate for sisters in skilled care. She then did volunteer work in the senior companion program, Bethany Apartments and the HOPES Center. After moving to Siena Center in 2015, she continued her volunteer work.

Sr. Betty Ann is survived by the Racine Dominican Sisters and Associates; her sister, Carol Marquardt; nieces and nephews; and friends. She was predeceased by her parents; her brother, Lawrence W.; her aunt, Sr. Angela Heegeman, O.P.; and her brother-in-law, Bill Marquardt.

ENTERED INTO ETERNAL LIFE

Obituaries of priests, their parents, deacons, and men and women religious who have been part of the church in southeastern Wisconsin.

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The Catholic Herald runs obituaries for men and women religious the last issue of the month. We reserve the right to edit submitted obituaries for length, grammar and clarity. Submit obituaries for men and women religious to hansonl@archmil.org by the third Thursday of the month for inclusion in the next issue.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Success of Kobonal Haiti Mission Proves American Catholics Really Are Making a Difference in Haiti

When Catholic donors give to a charity — particularly to support mission work in a country like Haiti — they often ask, “Is this really going to make a difference?” and “Is this really going to have a lasting impact on the poor?”

It may surprise you, but according to Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, the answer to those questions is a resounding “yes!” Cavnar has been working with Catholic missions around the globe for more than 20 years, and the case studies his team has compiled clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of outreaches run by priests, religious sisters and Catholic lay leaders.

One of the Catholic missions he often praises is the Kobonal Haiti Mission founded by Father Glenn Meaux. [See related story on opposite page.]

“The Kobonal Haiti Mission has a variety of effective ministries to help the poor, and one of their most successful outreaches is the school they operate for needy children in the Diocese of Hinche,” Cavnar said. “Children in that area of Haiti had been growing up illiterate prior to the Mission’s founding, and many became trapped in a cycle of poverty that virtually assured they would remain poor for the rest of their lives. When the school opened its doors, everything changed for those kids. They got a quality education, and that blessing opened up doors of opportunity for them.”

Cavnar also credited American Catholics for the role they have played in supporting the Mission’s many programs. They have been particularly supportive of Fr. Meaux’s school and helped it grow over the years.

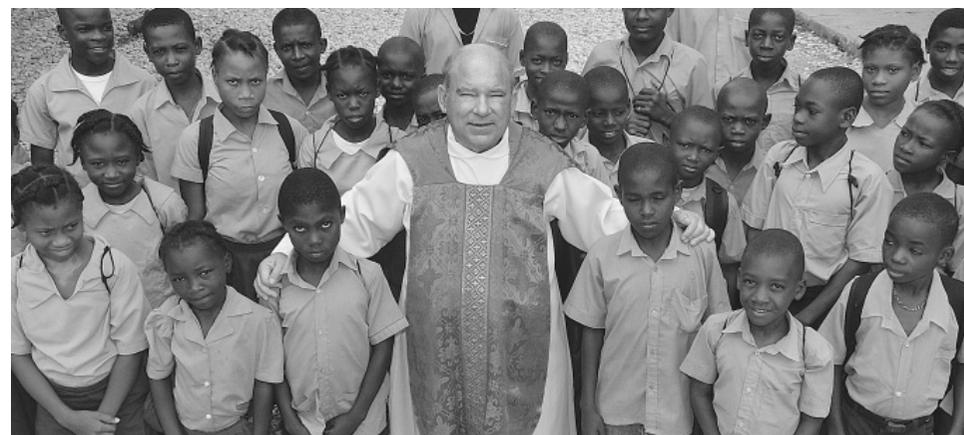
“Compassionate Catholics in the U.S. provided the financial support Fr. Meaux needed to fund construction of classrooms, hire staff and maintain the school’s operation,” he explained. “Their donations continue to support the great things he is doing, and he is deeply grateful for the help they are providing. His success depends on it.”

When asked why donors are so eager to support ministries like Fr. Meaux’s Mission in Kobonal, Cavnar suggested it is because American Catholics have a high level of trust in missionary-run programs, and they want a tangible connection to the families being helped. When they give to the Kobonal Haiti Mission, they are satisfied their gift will have a direct and meaningful impact.

“For example, when someone contributes to the Kobonal Haiti Mission’s educational programs, they know they are changing a child’s life for the better. In those cases, their gift becomes something like a scholarship. It educates a child who might otherwise have remained illiterate. The impact that it has is dramatic. In time, as those children grow up and can pursue better jobs, many are even able to lift up their entire family out of poverty.”

So the question — “Will my charitable gift really make a difference in Haiti?” — has been answered. Yes, it will!

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach education programs and other outreaches to the poor can contribute through the ministry brochure inserted in this issue or send tax-deductible gifts to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01806, PO Box 97168, Washington DC 20090-7168.



Above: Fr. Glenn Meaux in a photo taken at the Kobonal Haiti Mission school ten years ago. Thanks to the education these youngsters received at the school, many have grown up with spiritual guidance and now enjoy greater opportunities in life.

Below: One of the school’s current students. Her family is poor, so she relies on generous American Catholics to fund her education — and is extremely grateful for that blessing.



The ministry has a special need for partners willing to make gifts on a monthly basis. Use the inserted brochure to become a Mission

Partner or write “Monthly Mission Partner” on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.

Unique Christmas Catalog Created To Bless Donors — and the World’s Poor

If you are like most people, your mailbox has been choked with Christmas catalogs this year. In fact, their arrival has almost become a sign of the season, like the appearance of house lights and department store decorations.

This Advent and Christmas season, Cross Catholic Outreach intends to offer a catalog too — but theirs is a very different offering with a very different purpose. It has been designed to bless both givers and receivers by using the holiday gift-giving tradition to help the world’s poorest families.

Rather than offer gizmos, gadgets, neckties and jewelry, the Cross Catholic Outreach Christmas Catalog is giving Catholics with a concern for the poor an opportunity to share the blessings in their lives with needy families by sponsoring practical and urgently needed items like medicines, milk powder, seeds for farming, access to safe water or materials for roof repairs. Of course, it also offers blessings for children, including toys and sports equipment, so individuals can choose to sponsor both practical items suitable for families and gifts to

bring children joy.

“Like most Christmas catalogs, ours offers lots of items so donors can choose to give something very specific. That said, they can also make a general gift to address the poor’s greatest needs,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, the Catholic relief and development ministry offering this program. “When donors choose to give to Greatest Need, they provide us and the Catholic missions we serve with the freedom to address any urgent need. The priests and

religious sisters we support really appreciate that flexibility. It’s the best way to empower their work among the poor.”

This unique Christmas catalog is easy to access. Readers will find a link for it at the ministry’s website (CrossCatholic.org) or they can reach it directly entering the web address: CrossCatholic.org/Christmas.

“Our hope is that everyone will be blessed by the experience,” Cavnar said. “It’s the wonderful way for us to celebrate the birth of our merciful Lord!”

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Cross Catholic Outreach and Kobonal Haiti Mission Focus on Education to Lift Families Out of Poverty

Ask most Catholic missionaries how they would eliminate poverty in a developing country like Haiti, and they will usually begin by talking about the value of an education. Poverty, they will often say, is born out of illiteracy and is perpetuated by the hardships and lost opportunities the uneducated must endure.

“They will also explain that in one generation, a quality education can end this downward spiral and turn everything around. That is why so many Catholic missions make it a priority to send needy children to school. They know it can turn poverty into prosperity, sometimes even improving life for the children in the generations that follow,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, one of the leading Catholic ministries working to educate poor boys and girls in the developing countries of the world. “Once children break free from poverty, they tend to lift up their whole family and continue to make getting an education a priority when their own children are born.”

When Fr. Meaux and his missionary team arrived in Kobonal, Haiti, in 1989, he was deeply disturbed by the magnitude of poverty he saw there. Very few employment opportunities existed for the unskilled, uneducated population, so very few families were able to earn money to buy food.

Access to safe water was also a serious problem. Many families were traveling long distances to collect contaminated water from ponds or streams because no other options existed.

In addition to suffering caused by hunger and thirst, Fr. Meaux saw that families were also starving for spiritual guidance. Entrenched in superstition and occult practices, few had ever heard the name of Christ.

“There was no agriculture; there was no irrigation system; there was literally no hope at the time,” Fr. Meaux recalls. “With this sense of hopelessness, it is easy to see how Kobonal earned its reputation as the ‘darkest corner of the Diocese of Hinche.’”

Realizing that creating real and lasting improvement in Kobonal would require local children to be educated, Fr. Meaux included the launch of a school in his plans to revitalize the community, and that decision is now credited with starting the incredible turnaround the area has experienced.

“The Kobonal school became the centerpiece of the entire community’s transformation,” agreed Cavnar, who has helped the Mission develop its educational programs over the years.



ABOVE: Students at the Kobonal Haiti Mission’s school show their workbooks and celebrate the lessons they have learned — classwork they know will improve their chances of escaping the poverty that has plagued their families for generations.

“Fr. Meaux also used the school to bring down cases of malnutrition in the area by serving breakfast and lunch to the attending children. In every project he pursues, he keeps his focus on improving lives, and the Kobonal school plays an important role in that objective. It started as a way of educating the youngest kids in the area, but as children have moved through the program, it has evolved to include support for those seeking a higher education as well. As a result, it really does have the potential to break the cycle of poverty in Kobonal, ending poverty for individuals and families once and for all.”

According to Cavnar, many American Catholics share Fr. Meaux’s enthusiasm for educational programs that benefit the poor, and Cross Catholic Outreach regularly receives donations to support Catholic missions educating children in Haiti, Central and South America, and the developing countries of Africa.

“There are three types of people who regularly support education. One group has been blessed

by God, have children who were educated, and want that same blessing provided to others,” he said. “The second group is interested in giving to programs that break the cycle of poverty — to teach a man to fish, as the saying goes. They love educational ministries because they have that kind of life-transforming impact. The third group is drawn to our educational programs

because they want to change a life and bless a poor child in a very direct and personal way. They are effectively giving a scholarship to a child and can celebrate that their act of mercy will forever change a boy or girl’s life for the better. All of those are great reasons to support Catholic missions that educate the poor. All of them will make a world of difference.”

How to Help

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach’s effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper, or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01806, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

If you identify an aid project, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than needed, funds will be redirected to other urgent needs in the ministry.



Faith Brings Family Through Crisis

COLLEEN JURKIEWICZ
CATHOLIC HERALD STAFF

Whether on the basketball court or at the dinner table, the family of Duane and Kathy Mlachnik has always been all about teamwork, fortitude and faith.

Over the years, Erica, Anthony, Angela, Marla, Aubrey and DJ watched their dad, whose name will be recognizable to anyone who follows local high school basketball, lead by example on the court, helping his players grow both as athletes and as people.

“My parents always pushed us to make our own correct decisions. They were never ones to tell us what to do, but pushed us in the right direction,” said youngest son DJ Mlachnik.

Duane Mlachnik memorably served as a basketball coach at Pius XI and St. Thomas More High Schools (to name just a few of his coaching stints) before taking a job as the head basketball coach at St. John’s Northwestern Academy in 2016.

His children were standouts on the court as well, all going on to play at the collegiate level. DJ Mlachnik even followed in his father’s footsteps, joining him at St. John’s as assistant basketball coach; meanwhile, Erica, Anthony and Erica’s husband Scott are co-founders of Wisconsin RAP Basketball, a club whose mission is to develop responsible, well-rounded young adults who can succeed on and off the court.

The bedrock of their strong family foundation has always been their Catholic faith, something that felt natural and “organic” in their upbringing, said oldest daughter Erica Cook.

“It was never pushed on us — it was just something we did,” she said. “So when things went wrong, that was where we turned straight away.”

“Things went wrong” beginning in September 2020, when family patriarch Duane Mlachnik came down with a persistent knee pain that just wouldn’t let up. Then the breathing issues started — and several trips to the emergency room later, things hadn’t improved. On Oct. 4, he was admitted to a local hospital for what was originally diagnosed as COVID pneumonia and put on oxygen.

Just before they wheeled her husband out of the emergency room to be admitted to the hospital, Mlachnik’s wife Kathy — his high school sweetheart — grabbed his hand.

“You don’t have time to even think,” she said. “So as they



▲ The Mlachnik family gathered at the Milwaukee Marian Shrine the week of Thanksgiving to share their gratitude for Duane Mlachnik’s (back row, center, gray stocking cap) recovery from illness. (Submitted photo)

were saying, ‘We have to take him; you have to stay here,’ I took his hand and said, ‘Well, let’s at least say an Our Father really quickly.’”

Over the next few days, Mlachnik’s respiratory status declined so much that he was moved to the ICU and put on a ventilator, barred from receiving visitors due to COVID protocols. Things were happening fast, and answers were in short supply. But the family turned to their faith and rallied around their mom, gathering regularly at her house for prayer sessions and family meetings, as each of the Mlachnik children — whose careers span the worlds of finance, medicine, education and coaching — networked with people who could help them find answers.

Eventually, bronchial culture results revealed Mlachnik was actually suffering from a rare fungal pneumonia called blastomycosis.

This was a positive development because it meant the medical team could now move ahead with the correct treatment — but Mlachnik’s condition was still far from stable, and doctors told the family to prepare for the worst. They made the decision to have Mlachnik taken by Flight for Life to Aurora St. Luke’s Hospital in Milwaukee, where he stayed in a medically induced coma for three weeks. He wasn’t released from the ICU to the rehab floor at St. Luke’s until Nov. 19, and did not come home from the hospital until Dec. 23.

During his time in the ICU, Mlachnik went from 190 to 127 pounds. The damage sustained by his lungs is irreversible and puts him at increased risk for respiratory illnesses. He undergoes pulmonary rehab every day and has had to step down as head coach at St. John’s, a role now filled by his son.

“There is no prognosis if I will continue to improve, stay the same or hopefully not to digress at all,” said Mlachnik. “So for now, it’s rehab, living in the moment while living each day as its own, (and) having full trust in God and the journey he is taking me on.”

That journey, Mlachnik said, has been fueled by faith — not just for him, but for his family members and their larger community.

“Sometimes one of us would have a bad day and be like, why is this happening? But we would always go back to, ‘everything is according to God’s plan, not to our plan,’” said Cook.

Mlachnik trusts that it was, and continues to be, for a greater purpose.

“Nurses at the hospital, doctors — if it wasn’t every one of them, it was a lot of them saying basically what happened (to me) was a miracle. And it was absolutely faith-driven,” he said. “It has made so many friends and family members that had kind of gotten away from God, from church, reconnect with their faith.”

Even the littlest Mlachnik family members have been affected — Cook’s son Jordie recently took his rosary to show-and-tell day at his public school, explaining that “this is the rosary I used to pray for my Grandpa Duey.”

Last year on Thanksgiving, with Mlachnik newly released from the ICU, the family gathered at the Marian Shrine in Milwaukee to say a rosary and give thanks for his improving condition before heading over to the St. Luke’s parking garage to wave signs at his window.

Almost a year later, just a few days before Thanksgiving 2021, the entire family reconvened at the Marian Shrine — this time, with Duane in tow.

“I think we all feel like there’s a reason for this,” said Kathy Mlachnik. “I know that God wasn’t ready for Duane to go yet. We have a purpose. We both pray every night for that clarity of what is the reason. I’m trying to be patient with it, because Duane still isn’t healthy yet. But we both know there is something for us to do. He didn’t die because we needed to finish something.”

Magi Were on a Journey for Satisfaction

There's something both mystical and magical about the story of the magi, about who they were and what they were about. I am intrigued by them, those star-struck voyagers off on a journey in search of God-knows-who.

They're seekers, is what they are, and I think that is what captivates me about them. In some strange and curious way, they knew what they were looking for and yet they also didn't know. Maybe that sounds a bit zany, as in how can a person know and not know, both at the same time? But that does happen. I've been there myself. Haven't you gone to the refrigerator late at night looking for something to eat but not really knowing what you wanted – only something good, you say to yourself as you stand there in the dark of the kitchen bathed by the light spilling from the open refrigerator? Well, that's what I think the magi were doing, knowing and not knowing what it was they were seeking.

In search of a king, they thought, but then didn't know at all about who or where or how. All I know is that I've been on that same sort of quest, more than once and probably more than a thousand times. I'm not talking here about going to the refrigerator late at night, though I've done that too. I'm talking about all the times I've gone looking for more out of life without really knowing what that more would be or could be, and in the end never really finding it. Haven't we all?

We say to ourselves "I'll know it when I find it," except that we never do find it, not really, even though every once in a while we lean back with our arms behind our head and say to ourselves, "it doesn't get any better than this."



SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

FR. JOSEPH J. JUKNIALIS

EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Isaiah 60:1-6
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

That does happen and we do say that; but then life burbles on, the moment passes, and we're off again in search of something more without knowing what that something might be.

Then there's that part about seeing a star and deciding to follow it, again without knowing where it would take them. That, too, is a bit zany, even though there's a bit of that in all of our lives as well. Falling in love comes to mind. One never knows where that is going to take us. So,

too, does deciding what we're going to do with 40 hours out of every week for the greater portion of our lives. Having children can be another. It all comes down to making commitments of one sort or another. We either do, or we shy away from them and don't. I suppose you could say that the magi were committed to following the star wherever it would lead, though that brings both them and us back to the seeking, the knowing and the not knowing.

There's also the part of the story in which they find the child Jesus, leave gifts for him and head for home. I can't help wondering if they found the satisfaction they're seeking in a lasting sort of way. Was the quest of their life then over? If they were like me, I can't imagine that it was over, simply because there are those moments when, oh so briefly, we think we may have found what we've been looking for only to go on seeking to find that moment once again.

T. S. Eliot wrote a poem called "Journey of the Magi." The poem ends with the magi returning home, eager to tell their friends about what they had discovered, about who they had discovered and

how that discovery changed their lives. In the poem, no one back home is interested, at least not beyond a nod of the head and a roll of the eyes. It seemed everyone was happy to keep their lives the way they were. The poem ends with the magus who is telling the story thinking to himself that on their journey, they had found life but also they had found a kind of death, simply because it was a joy no one seemed eager to share or believe. That, too, says something about our lives – the realization that each of us ultimately makes the faith journey by ourselves. No one will or can make it for us. That's a bit of melancholy sadness, the fact that we make it alone, but it's also a source of strength that we stand on what we know as true whether anyone else chooses to do so or not. Ultimately it's the story of faith, in some sort of way both mystical as well as magical.

FOR REFLECTION

- How has seeking been part of your life?
- How do you deal with the restlessness that comes with looking for more?

Saint of the Week

Most people aren't very familiar with **St. Egwin** (d. c. 720), unless they're especially informed about Benedictine bishops who established monasteries in medieval England.

Born in the seventh century of royal blood, St. Egwin entered a monastery, and was enthusiastically received by royalty, clergy and the people as the bishop of Worcester, England. As a bishop, he was known as a protector

of orphans and the widowed and a fair judge. Who could argue with that?

St. Egwin founded Evesham Abbey, which became one of the great Benedictine houses of medieval England. It was dedicated to Mary, who had reportedly made it known to St. Egwin just where a church should be built in her honor.

St. Egwin died at the abbey on Dec. 30, 717. Following his burial, many miracles were attributed to him: The blind could see, the deaf could hear and the sick were healed.



● FRIDAY, JAN. 7

Fish Fry: 4:30 to 7 p.m., St. Florian Parish (Cristo Rey School cafeteria), 1215 S. 45th St., West Milwaukee. All-you-can-eat fish fry featuring heart-healthy baked or beer-battered fried cod, chicken tenders, French fries, buttered potatoes, coleslaw, rye bread, dessert and coffee or milk. Takeouts available.

Fish Fry: 4:30 to 7 p.m., St. James, 830 E. Veterans' Way, Mukwonago. Drive-thru only. Fried and/or baked cod and fried shrimp available. All dinners include a choice of potato, coleslaw, rye bread, tartar sauce, milk or coffee. Soda,

wine, beer and desserts available for purchase. Children's meals available. For more information, call 262-363-7615.

Fish Fry: 4:30 to 7:30 p.m., St. Sebastian, 1740 N. 55th St., Milwaukee. Fried or baked fish dinner, buckets and takeouts available. Find prices at stsebastian.net.

Fish Fry: 4:30 to 7 p.m., St. Peter Claver, 1439 S. 12th St., Sheboygan. Lightly breaded fish with French fries or potato salad, coleslaw or applesauce. Grilled cheese, coffee, milk, beer, soda, desserts and carry outs are also available.

● SATURDAY, JAN. 8

Lasagna Dinner: 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., St. Bernadette, 8200 W. Denver Ave., Milwaukee. Curbside pickup only. Included with the lasagna (meat or vegetarian) are garlic bread and tossed salad with Italian dressing. Dessert (peanut butter chocolate cake) is \$1. For more information or to place an order, call 414-358-4600 or visit www.stbweb.com.

● SUNDAY, JAN. 9

Holy Hour for Vocations: 2 p.m., St. John the Evangelist, 8500 W. Cold Spring Road, Greenfield. Sponsored by Roses for Our Lady.

PERSONALS

THANKS TO JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH and the Saints whom I pray to for favor. It was received. - R.K.

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Prayers for Priests

The Monthly Prayer Request for Priests (MPRP) is an international lay apostolate founded in 1990 to encourage people to pray and sacrifice for priests. This is a monthly calendar listing the name of a Milwaukee Archdiocesan priest for whom those who are interested in praying may offer prayers.

January

- 1 - Pope Francis
- 2 - Fr. Ryan Pruess
- 3 - Fr. Paul Raczynski
- 4 - Fr. John Radetski
- 5 - Archbishop Jerome E. Listecky and Bishops Jeffrey R. Haines and James T. Schuerman
- 6 - Fr. John Rausch
- 7 - Fr. George Rebatzki
- 8 - Archbishop Jerome E. Listecky
- 9 - Fr. Esteve Redolad
- 10 - Fr. Nathan Reesman
- 11 - Fr. Oriol Regales Vallverdu
- 12 - Fr. Philip Reifenberg
- 13 - Fr. David Reith
- 14 - Fr. Jerome Repenshek
- 15 - Divine Word Missionary Priests
- 16 - Fr. John Richetta
- 17 - Fr. Robert Richter
- 18 - Fr. Richard Robinson
- 19 - Fr. Rafael Rodriguez
- 20 - Fr. Sergio Rodriguez
- 21 - Fr. Domenic Roscioli
- 22 - Pallotine Fathers
- 23 - Fr. Edward Sanchez
- 24 - Fr. Daniel Sanders
- 25 - Paulist Fathers
- 26 - Fr. Norberto Sandoval Villalobos
- 27 - Fr. Dennis Saran
- 28 - Fr. Roger Savage
- 29 - Fr. Jonathon Schmeckel
- 30 - Fr. Donald Schmidt
- 31 - Salesian Fathers

For information about MPRP, call Anne Bender at 414-328-1568 or visit mprp-milwaukee.org

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Classifieds

HELP WANTED

PRINCIPAL

Notre Dame de la Baie Academy is seeking candidates for the position of Principal to begin July 2022. Notre Dame Academy is a co-educational Catholic college preparatory secondary school that seeks to education the whole person as our students grow spiritually, academically, physically, emotionally and socially. The principal oversees the educational and social programs of the school and is responsible for the daily operations. The principal works in partnership with the President to ensure the mission effectiveness of the school. Responsible for the details of the educational experience, the position requires academic leadership consistent with the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the mission of Notre Dame. For more about Notre Dame Academy, please copy this link to: <https://www.notredameacademy.com/employment/principal>. Qualified candidates should submit cover letter, personal statement of educational philosophy and resumé by January 28, 2022 to Char Dunlap, Executive Assistant to the President, at employment@notredameacademy.com.

SUMMER YOUTH MISSIONARIES

Are you interested in spending your summer getting paid to evangelize, grow spiritually, and make life-long friends? Apply to serve with one of our summer youth programs - Love Begins Here and Totus Tuus - today! Love Begins Here, provides local service trips for middle and high school students at parishes throughout the Archdiocese. Through service, prayer, community, and fun, Love Begins Here helps teens encounter the foundation of Christian service: a loving relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church. Totus Tuus offers a week-long, parish-based summer youth mission for students in grades 1-12 for parishes throughout the Archdiocese. A team of four missionaries teach and facilitate a catechetical program for parish youth through songs, skits, games, and short lessons. Both positions receive a weekly stipend, room and board while working. Must be 18 and a full year removed from high school to apply. Learn more about both programs and apply at <http://www.brewcitycatholic.com/summer-opportunities.html>

Next Issue: Jan. 13

Respect Life, Martin Luther King Day and School Open Houses

COLLEEN JURKIEWICZ
CATHOLIC HERALD STAFF

Tell us about the mission of The Harbor District, Inc., where you work as Outreach Programs Manager.

We're essentially both a location and an organization/nonprofit. We focus on revitalizing Milwaukee's Inner Harbor, which is the area approximately between the Third Ward and Bay View, and everything east of First Street, including the Port of Milwaukee. This special area of Milwaukee was so important to the industrial history of the city as it was — and continues to be — a working waterfront. Unfortunately, there are still remnants of contamination from the industries that were here a hundred years ago. This place was left contaminated, off-limits, and left our waterways in unhealthy conditions. Our purpose is to revitalize the Harbor District by connecting people to place, supporting a healthy business community and improving the quality of our natural environment. My job specifically focuses on activating public space near the water, leading the public engagement efforts on all of our different projects and ensuring the local community is connected to our work and has a say in how the District gets redeveloped.

Like so many young adults, you went through a period of time away from the Church, but you came back stronger in your faith. Can you tell us about that?

I was always involved as a kid in any and all the church groups possible, from choir camp to Bible camps and teaching Sunday school. In high school, I was part of the campus ministry at Dominican and was a part of the Veritas Team, and I even considered religious life at various points in my life. In college, I still kept going to church — though not as diligently as I was when I was back home. Just like any young adult, you're pulled in so many different directions, and your faith isn't a priority anymore. A couple of years after graduating college, I kind of

MY FAITH MINI-PROFILE

Natalia Hernandez St. Michael Parish, Milwaukee

Natalia Hernandez lives out her love of faith, family and community through her day job at The Harbor District, Inc., and in her spiritual life at St. Michael's Parish.

- Originally from Milwaukee, she grew up on the South Side, where her parents own and operate Mi Pais, a corner store and carry-out restaurant.
- She is a graduate of Dominican High School and the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.
- At St. Michael's, she participates in the young adult group and teaches First Communion classes. She is also a student in the Cardinal Stritch Saint Clare Center for Ministry and Leadership.
- Since 2019, she has worked for The Harbor District, Inc., a nonprofit organization supporting the revitalization of Milwaukee's Harbor District.



▲ Natalia Hernandez (second from left) enjoys Pho for dinner with the St. Michael young adult group. (Submitted photo)

had to re-encounter God in desperation. He gave me a lot of clarity on what was happening in my life at the time, and I started researching my faith again and questioning, "OK, what's the reason I want to stay here?" I think when we're younger, we're told by our parents, "Go to church, do this or do that," but this was really for me to ask myself, "Why am I here, why is my faith driving me now, why is God calling me, why does my heart feel like this?" I'm just so blessed with everything that's happened in my life once I decided to give my heart to God again. I've been actively involved in rediscovering my faith and having a relationship with God since then, and I will forever continue.

You're deeply involved in the young adult group at your parish. What can we do as a church to help young adults feel wanted and welcome?

This question came up during one of my assignments for the lay ministry program. I interviewed a number of our young adults and asked that question to them. Something I heard a lot was about giving them more responsibility and doing it in a way that builds upon their gifts. Instead of telling us what to do, ask us what are you good at and how can we incorporate that into the Church. The other thing that was emphasized was studying the Bible and being real about what the Bible teaches. A lot of our young adults don't know the Bible, and I think that contributes to why they're easily misguided. Imagine the beautiful thing that would happen if our young adults truly knew about how deep Jesus' love is for us and this world.

How does your faith interact with your professional work?

I can bring my faith into work a lot — people often ask, "What are you doing this weekend?" and I'm never afraid to tell them that I'm going to be doing something related to my faith like "Oh, I'm teaching First Communion kids," or "I'm going to my lay ministry class."

► **HERALD OF HOPE, FROM PAGE 3**

to our homes are opened wide and such people are welcomed as part of our “kinfolk.”

“ In the heart of all believers, don’t we all long for peace at Christmas time? Don’t we all meditate on the Incarnation of God’s very Son in the flesh and wish with all of our hearts that the Prince of Peace would vanquish all war and violence and establish a reign of justice and peace? ”

Now, comparable to the manner in which the Christmas Gathering unites people, the celebration of the Mass brings together people from a range even more expansive and diverse. It is quite an eclectic gathering. I notice this especially in my own parish, the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist in downtown Milwaukee. Sometimes, when I look out at the congregation, I can see such diverse arrangements like a president of a bank, a person who lives on the streets, a single mother and two fashionable urbane millennials all sitting in the same pew. I think only the Holy Spirit can accomplish something like that. So, in its own way, every Sunday Eucharist is a family holiday, as we also gather with our loved ones, all of us members of the Family of God.

It often is said that while Christmas is for everyone, it really belongs mostly to children. That is because they embrace the holiday with such sincere belief, open-hearted trust and wondrous awe. For them, every Christmas is a new adventure filled with hope and the potential of extraordinary and delightful surprises. Even wishes can come true.

I will never forget the child-like wonder of my nephew Christopher from a Christmas long ago. This was a time when he received a present that was quite nice, yet what fascinated him more than the gift was the enormous box that contained it. So, Christopher spent most of the evening, not entertained by the gift, but playing in its box. With his eyes bright with wonder, his imagination took him on journeys to spectacular places – as throughout the evening the box became a rocket ship, a castle, a fortress, a sky scraper (building) and the Bat Cave. It was impossible not to be enraptured by his awe and wonder.

I truly believe that it is possible to be captured by that same awe and wonder when we are willing to open “The Gift of Sunday.” There is potential in every celebration of the Mass to experience a similar adventure filled with the hope and potential of extraordinary surprises, as God reveals his glory and majesty in the Eucharist. Yet, for this to happen, we must recall what Jesus Christ told us when he was here on earth; that grace is open to us only if we become like children, for as he promised, it is children who are closest to the Kingdom of God. It is when we embrace the celebration of the Eucharist with sincerity of belief, open-hearted trust and wondrous awe that faith can take us into the very presence of God, where our deepest yearnings and wishes can come true.

There are many people for whom one of the best parts of the season is Christmas music. That’s why some radio stations even begin playing a Christmas

music format as early as mid-November. Whether it be Christmas carols, hymns, songs or instrumentals, everyone seems to have a favorite. Some people prefer the gentle lullaby of “Silent Night,” others cherish the stirring anthem of “Do You Hear What I Hear?” and still others favor the soaring artistry of “O Holy Night.”

However, it has long been my opinion that one of the reasons for the fondness of many people for favorite Christmas songs is that they tap into the deepest longings of the human heart. Which is why I believe so many people cherish Christmas songs that focus on the desire for peace.

In the heart of all believers, don’t we all long for peace at Christmas time? Don’t we all meditate on the Incarnation of God’s very Son in the flesh and wish with all of our hearts that the Prince of Peace would vanquish all war and violence and establish a reign of justice and peace? And, when we hear the chorus of the heavenly angels singing “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace” don’t we all want to get down on our knees and pray – pray with all we have – that this might come to pass? This just might be? That it might come true?

Which is why we all need “The Gift of Sunday” so much more than we sometimes even realize. Because it is precisely in the Eucharist that the song of peace continues. Think of it — every celebration of the Mass is filled with ongoing prayers for peace. We literally begin the Mass with the Penitential Act and beg the Lord to pour out his mercy on us and our world. In the Eucharistic Prayer, the great Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross is made present to reconcile our estrangement from God and others. In the gesture of the Sign of Peace, we extend our hands in the clasp of harmony and concord. In the Invitation to Communion, we beg the Lamb of

God to take away the sins of the world and grant us peace. In the rest of the world, the cacophony of terror and viciousness is loud and bombastic, so we need – we desperately need – to enter into the celebration of the Mass so we can continue to sing the hymn of peace, so we can nurture our longing for it and never, ever forget its melody.

It is very common for theologians and religious teachers to speak about “The Gift of Sunday” in the language of Easter. Because the Eucharist commemorates what is called the Paschal Mystery, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, each and every Sunday often is referred to as a “Little Easter.” Yet, as I have carefully tried to articulate the connection between the experience of our annual celebration of the Birth of Christ with the Eucharist, I think it also is possible to refer to each and every Sunday as a “Little Christmas” and to intentionally explain to people how faithful participation in the weekly Mass will keep alive the joy of the Christmas.

Which leads me to conclude this message with one final point. That is, I would like to encourage – and, yes, even challenge – you who have read this article to invite someone or some family who rarely attends church to come with you for the celebration of the Mass. I know that this may sound a bit intimidating to you, since we Catholics are not used to doing such brazen evangelization. However, it is only fitting that you should do this. As we all know, God has graced each and every one of us with “The Gift of Sunday.” In gratitude for this generosity, this most precious of gifts should be given as a present to someone else that you know and that you care about. I promise you, it will enliven and keep the spirit of Christmas in your heart!