CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter Connecting Disciples of Jesus with One Another and the Lord

Christmas 2022 / January 2023

We are a Welcoming Community that Inspires Disciples of Jesus to Share God's Love and Transform the World.



DIVINE MERCY PARISH

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As part of the Christmas season, we celebrate the beginnings of a new year with the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God on January 1. We can all benefit occasionally from a fresh start.

Perhaps we find ourselves in a rut. Or some debilitating thing has happened to get us a bit down on ourselves, or others. Or maybe its just the general condition of the world as filtered through the evening news.

Fresh starts are needed from time to time.

The New Year offers us an opportunity and provides for us some "freshness." We turn the page; we put out a new calendar; we make some resolutions; we step out of the old and into the new.

The start of a new year and its freshness coupled with the power of faith: who knows where we will end up? To be sure, faith equips us with vision and, in turn, vision leads us forward.

We have faith in God. God also has faith in us. He sends us grace upon grace. He showers us with many blessings. All this proclaims newness in our lives.

In these pages you will glimpse the "dearest freshness deep down," a reference from one of my favorite Gerard Manley Hopkins poems. (See the sidebar for the full version.)

Faith puts us in touch with the grandeur of God. Faith is what you will read about in the following articles. A faith that refreshes us and makes us new.

God's Grandeur Gerard Manley Hopkins

The world is charged with the grandeur of God. It will flame out, like shining from shook foil; It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod? Generations have trod, have trod, have trod; And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil; And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

The Staff of Divine Mercy Parish wishes you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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In two weeks, the Church will celebrate the feast of the Epiphany, the manifestation of Jesus Christ to the world. We know from the gospel of Matthew that the magi followed a star in their search for the newborn king of the Jews, so they could pay him homage.

What stars do you follow? What calls do you answer?

Parishioner Siobhan Hill recently answered a call, a call that led her to walk the Camino de Santiago, the Way of St. James. It's an ancient route used by pilgrims leading to Santiago de Compostela in north-western Spain, where it is believed the tomb of St James is located. Pilgrims have walked this road since the 9th and 10th centuries.

When asked what inspired her journey, Siobhan shared, "I felt 'The Call.' I first heard about the Camino four years ago while on a girls' weekend. One of the women was planning on walking the Camino with three friends the following fall. I had never heard of the Camino before, but the minute she began talking about it, I knew I was going to do it. I just knew it. A Holy Spirit Moment. Fast forward through COVID, postponed life events, a bemused yet always supportive husband, and I was finally able to walk the Camino in September '22. I had never hiked before, I'm not outdoorsy, not athletic—so this trek was completely out of my comfort zone, but I knew I had to walk it."

So where does one start?
Siobhan chose to walk the
Camino Frances. There are
several routes one can take, and
this route "starts at the base of
the Pyrenees and goes across
northern Spain. It's the longest
and most popular route, and
because it is so popular, there is
a nice infrastructure of hostels,
inns, and cafes that support
pilgrims. St. Jean Pied de Port is

a small town at the base of the Pyrenees and is the start of the

Camino Frances. I chose to start my Camino in St. Jean, but there is no right or wrong way to walk the Camino. There are no rules. You can walk 500 miles, or you can choose to walk the last 60 miles or any amount in between."

"I wanted to walk because I can. I'm very lucky that I can spend 35 days with nothing to do but wake up and put on my walking shoes! My primary reason for walking was to make a religious pilgrimage. I wanted to reflect on the gifts of my



life, as well as the opportunities that the upcoming years will hold. I also wanted to expand my comfort zone and challenge myself physically and mentally."

"The reasons why people walk the Camino are varied, some pilgrims are seeking a spiritual experience (the most common reason given for walking the Camino). Some walk with friends or family, enjoying each other's companionship as they trek across Spain. Some walk for others — a family member or friend who has passed. Some walk looking for an adventure, a path for discovery. Some walk for unknown reasons."

Siobhan shared more details about her Camino. "My route took me 550 miles across the Pyrenees mountains, through the larger cities of Pamplona, and then to the Meseta, a section of dry and arid Spain punctuated by fields of grasses and little else. Then on to the Galicia region, a rural farming community with surprising amounts of elevation and beautiful vistas. The first part of the journey is physical, the second, mental and the third spiritual as you finally make your way to the Cathedral in Compostela."

What is particularly amazing, is that Siobhan walked alone, and she was glad she did. "Some days were hard, much harder than I anticipated. On one hand, I was lonely and homesick, but it was nice to be in charge of no one but me.

A Parishioner You Should Know (Continued)

The Camino compresses your life into a 13-pound backpack and a good pair of hiking shoes."

Siobhan certainly met others on the way, which is "one of the reasons walking the Camino is so special. I was very lucky and met the most amazing people on my trek. When you start from St. Jean, the first day is a very steep climb. You cover 5500 ft. in about 5 miles. I was jet lagged and exhausted, and really wondering what I had gotten myself into. Fortunately, I stayed at a hostel where before dinner, each pilgrim stood up, introduced themselves and shared what made them want to walk the Camino. I was tempted to skip dinner that night after the long hike and curl up in my bottom bunk and enjoy a little privacy. But I went to dinner and ended up meeting three other women who were also walking alone. Our foursome walked together for the next two weeks.

At 61, I was the old lady of the group. Amy (40) was from London and a freelance artist who found she had some time

to herself after a hectic couple of months and chose to walk the Camino. Katie (22) originally from Ohio, graduated from college in May and was traveling for a year until she started law school. Gabriella (18) from Hastings, England decided to walk the Camino on a Wednesday and was at our hostel in the Pyrenees on the



following Tuesday! I don't have daughters, my husband and I are blessed with four sons, so it was such a treat to talk and walk (and sing and dance!) with these woman for 6-8 hours a day. We talked about everything. It was amazing!"

Siobhan had many more stories, and she'll share some of them at our first Women's Club gathering on Monday, January 23rd from 7-8pm in the Parish Center.

For the time being, we wondered how it felt when she finally arrived in Santiago de Compostela! Siobhan shared that her husband, Tom, joined her for the last 100 kilometers of the Camino. "We were grateful to walk into Santiago together. It was wonderful to see so many people that you spent the last month with, whether you walked with them, or shared a meal, or just kept seeing them in passing. It was really bittersweet. There was a sense of accomplishment, but



that was overshadowed by the prospect of a new beginning where I was excited to weave the best of my Camino adventure into my everyday life."

What calls do you answer?

Connecting Through Community

NEW PARISH EVENT, SUPER FUN SATURDAY, PLANNED FOR FEBRUARY 11

Families with young children are invited to join Divine Mercy Parish on Saturday, February 11, for Super Fun Saturday. The event will be held in the school gym at St. Philip the Apostle and will feature a bounce house, children's DJ, games, pizza, and lots of fun.

Planning for the event is well underway, and volunteers report their children are already looking forward to the event. "Given that my family is always looking for fun events we can do together -- there used to be so many pre-Covid! -- I was delighted to be asked to help with the creation of a new event for families with children at St. Philip's," said Sacred Heart School parent and Divine Mercy Parish Council member Sara Lanser. "Hopefully we will start a new annual tradition for the families of Divine Mercy Parish and community!"

"As a new parishioner with a four-year-old, I was very excited to get involved with planning an event for families with small children, especially at St. Philip's which is down the road from us!" said Alison Kehrer, whose family moved to Northfield during the pandemic. "I love the fact that this event will also be open to anyone, parishioner or not, and will hopefully

encourage others to get involved with Divine Mercy Parish. It will be a fun event to look forward to during a dreary time of year!"

"We hope as a result of this event that more families, especially with children, will get to know each other and form connections," said long-time parishioner Bobbie Weiss, who is helping plan the event. Weiss was an instrumental part of the volunteer team for the Pancake Breakfast that happened for many years at St. Philip the Apostle. She knows all the insider secrets of hosting an event in the school gym and kitchen.

Committee members are Sara Lanser, Sandy Norbot, Bobbie Weiss, Alison Kehrer, Dona Carroll, Jodie Hiveley, Meagan Vouziers, Ellen Castellini, Patricia Loukas, and Liz McGowen. If you would like to join the team for this event, please contact Liz at 847-446-0856 ext. 108 or Lmcgowen@divinemercynorthshore.org.

Tickets will be \$5 per person, with a maximum of \$20 per family; kids under 2 free. Tickets will be sold in advance at the parish website, <u>divinemercynorthshore.org/funsat</u>, and will also be available at the door. We hope you will join us!

The Viking Wire

CANDLES AND CAROLS. A TRADITION THAT CONNECTS GENERATIONS.

Ever since she was a student at Sacred Heart School, Timi Dury Williams has loved Candles and Carols. "It was always one of the highlights of the holiday season for my family. Weeks of work to memorize our songs culminated in celebrating together in the church, which was awash in twinkling candlelight." It even helped change the way she saw the beautiful, venerable building. "As a child, the church always seemed like a foreboding place: it was so large and intimidating. For Candles and Carols, however, it was different. It suddenly felt intimate with the lights dimmed, flickering candles, and the pews filled to the brim with friends, neighbors, and, of course, family."

For those who don't know, "Candles and Carols" is an annual Sacred Heart tradition where students work to learn and sing various Christmas-related songs to their friends and family in church. They are all guided and taught by our school music

director and educator, Jon Comstock. "It's a tradition that kids really look forward to each year," says Mr. Comstock. "It also promotes community involvement and gets parents more involved in the school." This tradition continues through the generations. "It is essentially the same staple of a program that is passed along, where

Candles and Carols 2022

parents who went through it now have their kids going through it."

"I'll never forget my first Candles and Carols; only six years old and still in Kindergarten," says Timi. "I was so nervous. What if I forgot the lyrics? What if I can't find my parents when it's over? Everything, of course, went smoothly, and Candles and Carols went on to become one of my favorite traditions. It truly



Candles and Carols 2022

signified the meaning of the season for me: friends and family gathering together to celebrate the coming of our savior."

And the cycle continues for Timi. All three of her

children are currently students at Sacred Heart School. And as she once did, they are now learning their

songs and practicing them to help make it a perfect holiday night. And just as her parents once did, she and her husband Hunter will be watching their children Finnegan, Harper, and Adler as they perform with all of their classmates. "I love seeing them practice their songs and see how excited they are to sing Candles & Carols 2022 in the church," she says. "It's a



chance to celebrate with our family and friends and remember the true meaning of the season: celebrating and glorifying a child who was born in the humblest of circumstances who would go on to save us all."



Timi Dury Williams and her children (clockwise from top right) Finnegan, Harper, and Adler

Engaging Children's Hearts

FORGING BONDS IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

What happens when four busy moms balancing families and careers are teamed together to teach first grade Sunday school? Big things!

Little did we know when Sara Dahlstrom, Caitlin Eck, Meghan McKinney Miller and Margaret Reynolds joined together to teach that great bonds would be formed, not only for these women, but the lucky children in their care.

"I told my mom (Mary Doug Brown), 'These three ladies are my people! We have so much fun together and we have a shared faith!" Caitlin Eck noted.

From the start, the four moms with a combined 11 young children all from Hubbard Woods began planning outside of sessions "to try to map out all we wanted to touch on," Caitlin added. "Right away we realized we work really well together. There is a lot of fellowship when the four of us get together, coupled with a lot of humor!"

Sara noted, "Spending time together helps me slow down. It is a welcome pause in a really busy life. I put teaching in a higher priority than getting involved in so many other things. It's a break from all the craziness (that young mothers face)."

"We all have too many activities," Meghan noted. "This one

takes priority." And, said Margaret, "Everyone has their heart into it. We back each other up and we never skip a beat."

What evolves from these planning sessions are well thought out lesson plans



with a lot of out-of-the-box thinking. All four women had a strong faith upbringing and honor the traditions of the Catholic faith. Last year, for example, Margaret came up with the idea for the children to fill out Gratitude Journals each day that they came into sessions. The children would draw a picture of what they were grateful for that day; the pages were compiled into a book at the end of the year and given to parents. "The gratitude journals drove home the point that we don't just thank God at church, but in everyday life and that there is so much to be thankful for," Caitlin noted.

"Football!" Meghan exclaimed. "They are very thankful for football!" In fact, she added, "We are trying to tell them that a 'Hail Mary' is not just in football!"

"It was a neat way for us to track their progress, to see how they grew," Margaret added. "It gave them a chance to focus on gratitude and God's presence in their lives throughout the different liturgical seasons of the year."

Another time the team walked the children around the Sacred Heart campus, where they visited the beautiful statue of Mary between the Rectory and Parish Center, as well as other statues, and the crucifix on the top of Sacred Heart Church. That day the children understood who Mary is and the special prayer we pray to her. They also visited the statue during May for the crowning of Mary, Margaret added, where they also said the Rosary.

One thing the team insists upon is no screen time during sessions. They use their time together with books and curriculum. The children keep them on their feet. Caitlin recalled a story in their workbook where one child stole another child's jacket. "The message was to give them their shirt, too, to turn the other cheek. That's a tough concept for children at this age."

Meghan thinks one key to the team's success is that, beyond genuinely liking one another, they all find strength from the traditional Catholic customs. She remembers being in college when her phone would ring on a Holy Day and her father would ask, "What Mass are you going to?" she recalled, laughing. "Ritual is really important to me," she added. "It's calming, centering. It gives us a framework, without being lofty, of what to do."

They all believe teaching has helped them continue to build their own faith. "My sister said, "Do they know you are not qualified for this job?" Meghan laughed. "I told her I thought my co-teachers could carry me through."

Margaret added, "It's so special to have the moms in the room with their children. It has given me a reason to go through and read and remember my lessons from growing up. It also helps grow our faith at home, as I am better prepared to answer questions."

Sara noted, "My mom (a Director of Religious Education for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee) loves it that we are all teaching together. She fully understands that it is not easy to raise kids in the faith and that it is a gift that we give our children."

This year the team stayed together and is now teaching 2nd grade, preparing the children for the sacraments of First

Reconciliation and First Communion.

A gift indeed.



Connected Through the Blessed Sacrament

THE MAGI BRING ADORATION TO SACRED **HEART CHURCH**

Meet our Magi – the group of women who brought Eucharistic Adoration to Divine Mercy at Sacred Heart! Meet Rita Compton, mother of three boys (Matthew, 18, Michael, 16, and Nicolas, 11) and Divine Mercy parishioner for 8 years. Claudia Goodrich, mother of two (Eleanor, 18 and Nelson, 16) and Divine Mercy parishioner for 12 years. Bonnie-Ann Hartwig, mother of three children (William, 18, Liesel, 16 and Capek, 12) and a Divine Mercy parishioner for just a few years.

Eucharistic Adoration has had a long tradition at St. Philip the Apostle (Friday mornings from 8:30-9:30 a.m.) and was sporadically 'celebrated' at Sacred Heart in the past, but it was the Magi who brought the devotion to Sacred Heart with a new fervor.

The desire to grow in their faith life grew slowly over the years, and was stoked more recently by participating in Bible Study with Father John Kartje. They felt a personal need for an open church for quiet prayer, contemplation, meditation, and spiritual reading - a place to slow down and just be. They recognized that others may be feeling the same and whether others are actively engaged, looking for a way to return, wanting to be in church but not necessarily in mass, or just discovering God, they found Adoration as their answer.

In 2021, they committed only to the month of May, the month of Mary, with no plans to continue. They were joyfully surprised that the experience was so meaningful to them that they have continued weekly on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. in Sacred Heart Church for over a year and a half! The Magi are hoping to offer Adoration more frequently, probably in the evening during special seasons of the liturgical year.

On a more personal level, Rita shared "Eucharistic Adoration gives me a dedicated hour that I really look forward to each week - time that I get to spend in prayer with the Lord. This includes the Rosary, time to focus on my list of intentions, and special prayers for time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Each type of prayer fills me up, and I have learned what a privilege it is to be able to pray for others. I also look forward to reading Scripture, and simply sitting quietly with the Lord and clearing my mind so that I can leave myself open to hearing whatever I need to. By the time the hour is over, I feel relaxed and rejuvenated - it makes such a difference to spend

time with Jesus - just like how you feel refreshed when you have a nice chat with a dear friend! "

Rita went on to say that "Like the themes of Advent, Eucharistic Adoration feeds my soul by allowing me to experience the Hope I have in Jesus, Peace that surpasses understanding, Joy that comes from knowing the Lord is in control, all tied together by Love for God and others. Time with God, praying and reading His Word, keeps me grounded in my faith, and I'm so thankful we are able to share this special time with our wonderful parish community."

Claudia shared that "The Holy Hour of Adoration is an

invitation to me to slow down, quiet my mind and body, refocus my attention on higher priorities. I spend the time praying, reading a spiritual book or letting my mind wander in a conversation with Jesus, prompted by my imagination which asks what would I say or ask if he was right in front of me. I walk out of the hour calmer, more at peace, relaxed and refilled. It feeds my soul. It's a beautiful place and way to spend an hour."

In the rush of the day, Bonnie-Ann realized exactly what Eucharistic Adoration is for her - "peace and calm in the presence of Jesus, a time to pray and reflect." She went on to say that when they started Adoration, "it was only supposed to be for the month of May. By the end of the month, we realized we couldn't stop, we didn't want to stop. What happens in that church in that one hour is a total gift. I walk out the church refreshed with a whole new perspective, a better perspective, a peaceful outlook!"

The Magi are grateful to have a solid following and hope and pray that others join them to discover the joy of Eucharistic Adoration. For a non-believer, Eucharistic Adoration might be a quiet hour in a beautiful place, a non-intimidating and unstructured peaceful time. For a believer, it is an hour in the presence of Jesus.

Rita, Claudia and Bonnie-Ann are notorious for saying "We take the time to have coffee with our friends to nurture and deepen those relationships. Why not take advantage of Eucharistic Adoration as an opportunity to slow down and deepen one's relationship with Jesus?" Life is so busy, so come for whatever amount of time suits you - stop in for 5 minutes or stay for an hour - whatever works. They begin with the Holy Hour by praying the Rosary aloud followed by quiet time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. All are welcome – please join



Bonnie-Ann, Rita and Claudia

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WEEKEND MASSES

Saturday: Sacred Heart Church - 5pm

Sunday: St. Philip the Apostle Church - 8am

Sacred Heart Church - 10am Sacred Heart Church - 4:30pm SACRED HEART CHURCH 1077 TOWER RD. WINNETKA, IL 60093-1852 ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE CHURCH 1962 OLD WILLOW RD. NORTHFIELD, IL 60093-2913

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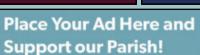
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