

CONNECTIONS

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

**February
2023**

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



We grow as we *CONNECT* through service,
community, worship, and faith sharing.



DIVINE MERCY PARISH

SACRED HEART CHURCH · ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE CHURCH



Does it feel to you as if the pace of life has gotten even more busy, packed and intense? That's the way it feels to me.

We've got a lot of technology to help us these days, from smart phones to laptops and iPads, to smart TV's, computers and watches that tell us our temperature and our diabetic count. All this stuff was supposed to make life easier and more efficient.

I suppose the technology has done exactly that, but we've just packed more things into the free time that this technology has created for us. What's the deal with that?

Are we afraid to have time alone, or time to pray? Are we afraid of what our conscience will tell us in our down time, if we but listen? Are we wary of how Jesus might challenge us if we take the time to meditate? Or is it as simple as we Americans feel guilty for taking time off and relaxing?

Connections is a wonderful resource!

Please take the time to peruse its pages. Discover other dedicated disciples like yourself who are on the faith journey and who participate in the mission of Christ in the world.

All that technology that I mentioned is important, some of it is necessary in today's world. But what is even more necessary is the salvation Christ brings us as a free gift. We just need to make the time and space within our hearts to accept that gift and allow it to change us.

Connections can help you with that. Turn the pages of this issue; explore what's inside. I think you may find the gift of Christ waiting inside yourself. Tap into the beauty and the power of the Lord Jesus.

ASH WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE (FEBRUARY 22nd)

8:30 a.m. - Mass at Sacred Heart (School Mass) with ashes
 Noon - Liturgy of the Word at Sacred Heart with ashes
 12:30 - 3:00 p.m. - Continual distribution of ashes at St. Philip.
 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. - Continual distribution of ashes at Sacred Heart.
 6:30 p.m. - Mass at St. Philip with ashes

STAFF YOU SHOULD KNOW

Pastor - Rev. Steven M. Lanza,
 slanza@divinemergynorthshore.org

Retired Resident - Rev. Robert P. Heinz,
 rheinz@archchicago.org

Deacons - Mike McNulty (retired), Gerry Keenan,
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 Bob Puhala, bpuhala@usml.edu

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Sharing Good News
by Being Good News

Point of View

A PARISHIONER YOU SHOULD KNOW

Alison Kehrer | The Power of Prayer in Community
By Liz Riggs

"Pray, hope, and don't worry." ~Padre Pio

This is a story about the power of prayer - more specifically, the power of prayer in community. Alison, her husband Rick, and their young daughter, Katharine, moved from the West Loop to Northfield in May 2021. They had been members of Old St. Patrick's Church in Chicago, and she was excited about getting involved at Divine Mercy Parish.

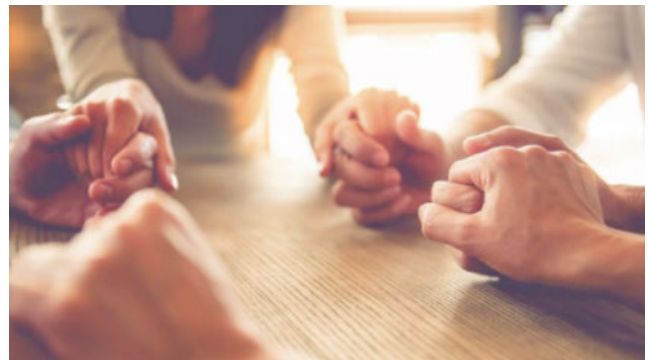
One of the first ways Alison became involved was by joining a faith sharing group for Lent. This group brings together parishioners to read scriptures, pray, and discuss their faith. Due to Covid restrictions, this particular group was held virtually.

What started as a way to get involved, ended up becoming a lifeline for her during an incredibly difficult time.

"God works in mysterious ways."

At the same time Alison started to get involved in this group, her husband went in for a routine doctor's visit, and after a few tests, his physicians ended up finding something on his liver. In a very short span of time, they learned that Rick had a rare form of cancer called cholangiocarcinoma, or bile duct cancer, and needed treatment immediately.

In the midst of this diagnosis and the uncertainty surrounding her husband's health, Alison felt compelled to show up for her weekly prayer group. Shortly after Alison logged onto the meeting, the group offered up intentions. Alison asked for prayers for her husband, and unexpectedly broke down, sharing the details of his diagnosis and impending surgery. The group's first response was that of warmth, care, and concern, followed by a call to action, "What can we do to help?" and "Do you want the parish to pray for you?" Her faith sharing group went to work right away.



A few weeks later, on the day her husband had the tumor removed, Alison said their family unexpectedly received several baskets of goodies. It was Good Friday, and the prayer group thought she could use some helping hands before Easter. The outpouring of love, support and prayers from a group she had just joined was overwhelming. In Alison's words, "There is a true sense of community at Divine Mercy Parish."

A Parishioner You Should Know (Continued)

It's been several months since his surgery, Rick is doing well and has just finished chemo treatment to lessen the chance of recurrence. His prognosis is good and the family continues to make their faith and the power of prayer in community a priority.

Alison says praying keeps her positive and grateful; she feels as though her husband was truly given a second chance. "Every single night, I pray with my daughter

and talk about all the people and things we are thankful for." The impact and power of prayer in the community continues. Alison and her family would like to say thank you to the people of Divine Mercy for their support and prayers!

To learn more or to donate for research of this rare and aggressive form of cancer, please follow this [link](#) to the Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation.

Connecting Through Community

WONDERING IF YOU SHOULD TRY ALPHA?

Read what one of our attendees shared.

1. WHY DID YOU TRY ALPHA?

Through word of mouth, I was encouraged to attend a session. Our family attended church most Sundays until Covid. Then we found ourselves taking a two year break. It was time to reengage with the church, my faith and my relationship with God. I found myself needing something a little more than Sunday mass.

2. WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE VIDEOS?

The videos are filmed beautifully. The message is delivered with clarity. I feel so engaged as a viewer that I'm often disappointed that the video isn't longer!

3. HOW DID YOUR TIME IN THE SMALL GROUPS FEEL?

I looked forward to time as a small group. The conversation always flowed and took meaningful turns. I loved sharing ideas with others and listening to their experiences. It's an opportunity to learn from each other, pray together and laugh together. How lucky to meet new wonderful people!

4. WHAT ARE THREE OR FOUR WORDS TO DESCRIBE YOUR ALPHA EXPERIENCE?

Warm, inviting, reflective, peaceful

5. WHAT DO YOU TELL YOUR SPOUSE/FRIENDS ABOUT YOUR ALPHA EXPERIENCE?

I encourage my friends/spouse to try it out. Alpha meetings are warm and open-minded. I always left the meetings feeling more at peace than I did before walking in. Every meeting gave me an opportunity to deeply reflect.

6. WHAT SURPRISED YOU ABOUT ALPHA?

Alpha made me more curious about the Catholic faith. I feel more comfortable practicing as a Catholic. Alpha inspires me to be a better person. I never expected to have this reawakening of my faith - it's a wonderful feeling.



To learn more about Alpha, visit our website [here](#) or use this QR code.

LOVE A GOOD STREAMING SERIES?

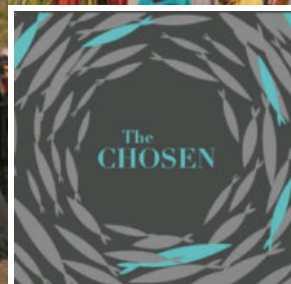
Then you should join us to watch the 1st season of *The Chosen*, the #1 crowd-sourced project of all time. It's also a great way to connect with community at Divine Mercy during the Lenten season this year. We hope you'll consider this for your Lenten journey.

We'll gather on Thursday nights in the Parish Center at 6:30 p.m. to watch *The Chosen* beginning February 9th. (Come a few minutes early for pizza/salad if you like.) We'll then break into small groups to talk about the episode, led by Judy Pyke and other parishioners who can also share a little background. There are 8 episodes and each one varies in length, but our goal is to be finished by 8:00 p.m.

Already seen *The Chosen*? That's okay! Come watch it again with friends from the parish. You'll be surprised what you catch the second time around, and the opportunity to talk about this series in a group and hear what others catch is enriching as well.

The Chosen begins February 9th and will run through Lent. Yes, we know we're starting before Lent, but we want to finish the week before Holy Week, so all will be ready to celebrate the most important liturgies of our faith.

Come join us!



The Viking Wire

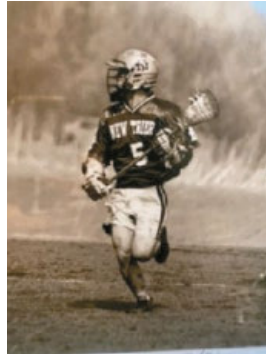
January 30th, marked the kickoff to Catholic Schools Week in America. Catholic Schools Week is a time to reflect upon and celebrate the unique advantages that religious education provides. However, as we all know, things are a little different around here. The North Shore is dotted with public schools that are the envy of most of the rest of the country, but they aren't always a one-size-fits-all solution. For some parents, catholic schools are a better way to go.

Matt and Laurie Schachman have experienced both options and have come to their conclusions as to which is best for their kids. Parents of four Sacred Heart School students, and themselves public school grads, they fall squarely on the side of Catholic education. "I would say it (catholic school) is very different than what our parents experienced when we were kids," says Laurie. "As parents ourselves, it's an amazing thing knowing each and every grade school parent. It's a village, and we treat each other's kids as our own. Sending our kids to their friend's houses and knowing they will be exposed to the same values our families share is a huge comfort in our times. Our parents had to roll the dice based on which circles we chose to run in."

When it comes to education, Catholic schools offer benefits that public schools cannot match. Matt says class size and adherence to a moral core are two significant factors. "Academics are table stakes. The small class size and teacher involvement has helped all our kids grow academically. The faith-based focus on values and morality has helped us align what we talk about at home with what our kids learn at school."



Clockwise from top: Ainsley, Scarlett, Blair, and Callaghan



Matt back in his high school lacrosse days



provide a quality education for four kids can be a challenge, being at Sacred Heart makes their jobs as parents more fulfilling and allows them to feel a part of something bigger. "The extra work it takes to be a parent has helped keep us in an environment with other families that share our values and who have become good friends," says Laurie.

Kids are growing up faster than ever in the era of social media. One of the other advantages of Catholic schools is cutting out the craziness swirling around students and focusing on the basics of education; reading, writing, math, science, and the arts. The world will still be there when the kids go to high school and college. Sacred Heart focuses on educating students' hearts, minds, and souls in these crucial early formative years.

Catholic Schools Week is an excellent time to reflect on the unique qualities and advantages of private, parochial education. In a world where parents compete with TikTok and Instagram for attention, Matt and Laurie Schachman are grateful to have found a school that promotes and encourages time-honored traditions and faith-based truths. "Our family feels so blessed to have found Sacred Heart nine years ago," says Laurie. Our children absolutely love their school."



Laurie, Matt, and the kids on vacation

And while sometimes going that extra mile to

Engaging Children's Hearts

JEFF LINK KEEPS IT REAL WITH YOUTH ALPHA 7TH GRADERS

Let's just say that Jeff Link is inspired by the upcoming generation. A catechist for 12 years, he effuses positivity when he talks about teaching 7th grade Youth Alpha with co-catechist Sam Fifer.

"These kids are smart, smarter than we give them credit for," he says. "I am blown away by how advanced these kids are in their thinking."

This whole generation is "extremely non-judgmental," Jeff added. "They are so accepting of people's differences, whether it be race, religion, even sexuality. They are emotionally smarter and emotionally more secure. It's a really good thing."

He also sees this generation has a take-charge attitude, that they believe "if you are upset about something in today's world, you can do something about it." Younger people today also seem to have a better work-life balance, Jeff added. They instinctively seem to know that there is more to life than just working all the time, which is different than the generations that preceded them, he believes.



That's why Jeff thinks that Youth Alpha works so well with the children. "The beauty of Youth Alpha is that you are not berated for asking questions. There is never a feeling that 'you should know that,'" he added. Instead, children are encouraged to question, doubt, share opinions and their feelings. According to Jeff, it works and works well.

That was not always the case, Jeff said. When Jeff first started, he was a co-catechist in a traditional classroom where answers were considered to be either "right" or "wrong." He'll take the free-flowing, non-judgmental Youth Alpha approach any day. He thinks it brings the children closer to Jesus, their faith and religion and that it is a sign of hope for the parish.

"I don't judge the kids. I don't know all the facts and figures. But I don't think you need to know all the facts and figures to be a religious person," he noted. Plus, he laughed, if he needs facts and figures he always has Sam, who is nearly

encyclopedic in his knowledge of Catholicism!

Jeff sees the Youth Alpha approach working well with the children. Ten minutes into class they are chatty and interested in the content, he noted. "We are building a camaraderie around faith," he said. "We are having a joyful discussion with 25 others around the topic of faith. It's uplifting."

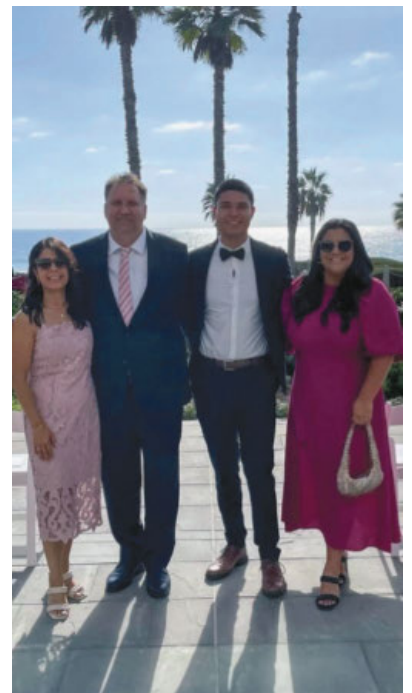
Jeff believes that focusing on building a relationship with Jesus and openly talking about and questioning faith are keys to the future for children in the parish. "When I was on the school board at Sunset Ridge, we learned that there are five ways to learn something and teachers often had to use all five ways because we all learn differently. I think it is the same here. We all learn by doing, seeing, touching."

Plus, he noted, we have to continue to change so the children will want to be there. We have to make these fun learning experiences. Even the NFL is changing the way it reaches out to children, he laughed, so we better continue to evolve, too.

Jeff's faith runs deep and strong. He has shared it through teaching, by serving on the Children's Ministry board for 11 years and by volunteering his wife, Lourdes, and children, Nick and Bailey, for everything from traffic management to greeting at St. Philip's, which is walking distance from his home.

But it's his enormous gift of being able to relate to the children, to promote open communication without judgment, and to generally enjoy hearing the children's voices that stands out in the classroom and beyond.

**The Link Family
(l to r)
Lourdes, Jeff,
Nick and Bailey**



Connected Through Service

TUTORS FROM DIVINE MERCY PARISH MAKE A DIFFERENCE AT TOLTON ACADEMY

On Tuesday and Thursday mornings during the school year, a small group of volunteer tutors from Divine Mercy Parish carpools down to Augustus Tolton Academy, located at 71st and Calumet in Chicago. The Catholic school is on the campus of Divine Mercy's sharing parish, St. Moses the Black. Founded in 2015, Tolton Academy is a combination of the former parish schools of St. Dorothy and St. Columbanus.

Divine Mercy parishioner Rebecca Wysocky has been a Tolton Tutor since 2015. "Driving to Tolton Academy with our tutoring group has offered a way to meet new people, make new friends, and do something with purpose that is meaningful to me. I started because I have a child that required many services, and I felt that I could share with the Tolton kids the things I had learned about reading, math tricks, memorizing, vocabulary, eye contact, and even handshakes and how to introduce oneself," said Wysocky.

"Tutors are encouraged to come a few times a year, once a week when it works or as often as they choose," said Kathleen Clarke, who also began tutoring in 2015. The group all goes together in one car, meeting at the A.C. Nielsen Tennis Center (530 Hibbard Rd.) at 9:00 am and returning around 1:30 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tutors do not need to drive but need to be able to get to the pick-up spot.

"Tutors don't need to bring anything other than themselves and a loving, patient, and helpful attitude," added Clarke. Experience is not required and materials are provided. Volunteers spend their mornings meeting with children in grades kindergarten through 8th. Each tutor usually meets with two students for 30 minutes at a time.

"It is our privilege to be allowed to work with the students at Tolton Academy," said Clarke. "When I think of the complexities of running a school with many disadvantaged students such as this, I am always amazed."

"Tutoring has offered great enjoyment for me. The families of these children care deeply for their children, work hard to keep their children in a safe learning environment at Tolton, and I feel I contribute by helping. I feel safe and respected when I am there," says Wysocky.

New tutors are always welcome. All tutors must be compliant with the Archdiocese of Chicago's child protection program, Virtus. If you are interested in becoming a Tolton Tutor, contact Liz McGowen at Lmcgowen@divinemercynorthshore.org or 847-446-0856 ext. 108. To find out more about Tolton Academy, visit toltonacademy.org.



The 2022-23 Tolton Tutors include Joan Cardin, Kathleen Clarke, Jim Freeman, Ann Mostofi, Anne O'Brien Prager, Lisa Seymour, and Rebecca Wysocky.



Tolton Academy Students



DIVINE MERCY PARISH

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www.divinemercynorthshore.org

WEEKEND MASSES

Saturday: Sacred Heart Church - 5pm

Sunday: St. Philip the Apostle Church - 8am
Sacred Heart Church - 10am
Sacred Heart Church - 4:30pm

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