

C⁺ONNECTIONS

A Collection of Stories
Connecting Disciples of Jesus
with One Another and the Lord

**Christmas
2023**

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



DIVINE MERCY PARISH

SACRED HEART CHURCH · ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE CHURCH



A DIVINE SEASON OF CONNECTEDNESS

Recently I had a whole bunch of photos from my photo albums digitized. I was going through the digital files looking at them again.

There were a number of photos taken at Christmas time that feature members of my immediate family as we are, invariably, gathered around the Christmas tree with the debris of gift unwrapping all around us.

There are also an abundance of photos showing my extended family, all the aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents gathered around holiday tables weighed down by tons of Italian dishes and goodies.

Happy faces. Smiling faces. Faces of family. Holiday decorations. Homes warmed by sharing and caring. Being together. The connections and networks of nourishing relationships made possible by the relationship of fidelity of our God who comes to earth and dwells with us in Jesus Christ.

May this divine season of "connectedness" lift you up and fill your heart with joy, hope and love.

F. St.



STAFF YOU SHOULD KNOW

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

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

Retired Resident - Rev. Ken Kiepora

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

Director of Evangelization & Life long Formation -
Patty Sanfilippo,
psanfilippo@divinemergynorthshore.org

Director of Liturgy and Music - Ron Vanasdlen,
rvanasdlen@divinemergynorthshore.org

Director of Pastoral Care, Outreach and Special Events - Liz McGowen,
lmcgowen@divinemergynorthshore.org

Director of Operations -

Michelle Wasielewski,
mwasielewski@divinemergynorthshore.org

Director of Children's Ministry -

Kathy Handelman,
khandelman@divinemergynorthshore.org

Assistant Director of Children's Ministry -

Kelly Shoup, kshoup@divinemergynorthshore.org

School Principal - Jodi Reuter,
jreuter@shwschool.org

Director of Communications - Judy Pyke,
jpyke@divinemergynorthshore.org

Finance Office - Cindy Atsaves,
cindyatsaves@divinemergynorthshore.org

Administrative Assistant - Megan Nolan,
megan@divinemergynorthshore.org

SHARING GOOD NEWS
BY BEING GOOD NEWS

Point of View

A PARISHIONER YOU SHOULD KNOW

CLAUDIA GOODRICH | CONNECTIONS

By Liz Riggs

"Love as though you would live forever; live as though you would die tomorrow."

Throughout our lives, many of us will experience uncertainties, doubts, and challenges along our spiritual journey. Claudia Goodrich's story of faith, spiritual enlightenment, and servant leadership will resonate with many and serve as a source of inspiration.

Claudia's story begins in the Philadelphia suburb of Wayne, PA, where she grew up as one of seven siblings in a household that shared Catholic and Protestant traditions. Although Catholicism was a primary influence in her life, she shares that it wasn't a central focus during her formative years, despite her participation in all of the sacraments and Catholic teachings and traditions. When she went away for college, Claudia felt almost liberated from her religious ties. Despite Georgetown's strong Catholic roots and faith-based education, Claudia chose to step away a bit from some of the practices and focused primarily on her academic and career-oriented pursuits.

Shortly after her graduation, she received a call from her older sister. Little did she know that this call would set the stage for a profound spiritual awakening. Her sister, sensing a longing within Claudia, encouraged Claudia to accompany her and their brother on a pilgrimage to a small village in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Medjugorje, which is a sacred place where many have experienced miracles and return feeling spiritually renewed.

While initially hesitant, Claudia embarked on the trip with somewhat low expectations. However, it didn't take long for her experience and expectations to shift. While she, her sister and her brother sat inside the church at Medjugorje for hours, time seemed to stand still.

Claudia was overcome with joy; she felt completely shrouded in peace. In fact, Claudia felt such a profound sense of calm, she was reluctant to leave the church and go back out into the chaos of the world. Eventually, they left the church, and shortly after leaving, all three siblings experienced a moment of grace as they gazed at the sun with the other people who had made the pilgrimage. It was a moment so intense that the experience forever altered her perspective and deepened her connection with God.



Claudia pictured with her family: husband Andy, daughter Eleanor and son Nelson.

Shortly after returning from Medjugorje, Claudia made her way

A Parishioner You Should Know

to Chicago, drawn in by the opportunities of a big city and the familiarity of home as she had extended family living in the area. She was doing well in her new job and acclimating to her life in a new city. While she remained devoted to her faith, she was not actively engaged in the church until a poignant dream changed her outlook. In her dream, attempting to attend Mass, she found every church she approached boarded up, prompting a deep sense of urgency upon awakening. This inspired Claudia to make an intentional commitment to attend weekly Mass, a dedication that continues to this day.

Her journey eventually led her, her husband, Andy, and their family to Sacred Heart Church, where the energy and passion of the priest captivated her heart and spirit, and the congregation's collective affirmation, "God is Great! All the Time!" became a mantra that echoed within her.

Over the years, Claudia has grown increasingly more dedicated to prayer, nurturing her faith, and serving others. She is an anchor in her family, and she and her husband remain committed to their children's religious formation and the family's overall



Claudia (pictured above on the right) along with Bonnie Ann Hartwig and Rita Compton initiated Eucharistic Adoration at Sacred Heart Church on Wednesday afternoons from 2-3 p.m.

spiritual development.

In addition to being a Catechist for weekly religious education classes and attending ALPHA, Claudia has also served on the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and as a Children's Ministry Board Member. She recently completed a four-year Scripture Studies program at Loyola University Chicago's Institute of Pastoral Studies. Inspired by all of her experiences, Claudia feels compelled to be a part of the faith movement, sharing the peace she has experienced throughout her journey.

Recently, Claudia, along with a group of parishioners, initiated a weekly Eucharistic Adoration, providing a sacred space for quiet contemplation. She is hopeful that

this will provide another way for all parishioners to connect with their faith.

Claudia's life is a testament to the transformative power of embracing faith and answering the Holy Spirit's call. Her journey inspires us all to lean into the uncomfortable, remain open to growth, and actively participate in the beautiful tapestry of our faith community.

Rediscovering the Significance of Community

Candles in the Dark: Family, Faith, and Rediscovery by Justin Lyons

Having grown up with the foundational teachings of the Catholic Church, it wasn't just a place of worship for me; it was a community that deeply influenced my moral compass. But, over time, like many, I drifted away. As the winds of life carried me further from my roots, a significant void began to emerge.

This void became even more palpable when I recognized a responsibility not just to myself but to my four children: Miles, Marley, Micky, and McKinley. What moral and spiritual framework was I offering them? In a world bursting with distractions, I yearned to provide them with the same community grounding that had shaped my youth.

Miles and Marley: Young Navigators of Faith

As life would have it, it was my son's entry into Loyola Academy that prompted a profound reevaluation. Why had I never baptized him or Marley? It was a burning question, one that nudged at my heartstrings, urging a return to a community that had once held such significance.

Under the guiding light of influential community figures like Patty, Alex, Maureen, and many unnamed people of faith at Divine Mercy, Miles and Marley embarked on a transformative journey. Their progression towards baptism wasn't merely a ritualistic passage through the Rite of Christian Initiation; it was a profound awakening. The Easter Vigil became a testament to this, where amidst the soft glow of candles, they found themselves enveloped in love, not just from family and friends but from strangers, united in their Catholic faith.

Connected Through Community

Fatherhood: Understanding Jesus's Sacrifice

In watching my children navigate their faith, I couldn't help but draw parallels to the teachings of Jesus. As a father, I am tasked with the monumental responsibility of guiding them, of sacrificing for them, and of embodying love even in the face of adversity. Isn't this what Jesus exemplified?

During these pivotal moments of my children's spiritual exploration, my life was a whirlwind of challenges. Yet, gazing up at Jesus on the cross each weekend, with nails piercing His hands and feet and a crown of thorns upon His head, I discovered a renewed strength. Like Jesus, who endured suffering for those He loved, I found an unyielding drive to endure for my children.

Lessons from the Journey: Love is the Ultimate Goal

Through all the introspections, discussions, and shared spiritual experiences, a singular message emerged: the essence of humanity's design is to love. To be kind,



Justin and his children;
Miles & Marley center.

honest, and self-sacrificing. To serve. They are messages I fervently hope to instill in my children.

"Love God. Love your neighbor as yourself" Such simple, yet profound commandments. They encapsulate the hopes and dreams of every parent – for their children to find peace, love, and purpose, all while embracing and exuding inherent goodness.

Reflecting on the Spiritual Voyage and Aspirations for Future Generations

Our journeys of faith are deeply personal yet intertwined with the larger community. As I reflect on my voyage, filled with uncertainties, rediscoveries, and profound moments of clarity, I am filled with hope. Hope that my children, and their children after them, will continue this exploration of faith and humanity's intrinsic design.

For in understanding and embracing our true nature – a nature anchored in love, sacrifice, and community – we find the compass that points towards a brighter, kinder world for future generations.

Community Connections



Teen Council



December Uncle Pete's Crew



Advent by Candlelight



ALPHA



School Choir



College Care Package Gathering

Discover more about Divine Mercy by visiting our website at divinemercynorthshore.org.

Connected to Sacred Heart School

Sacred Heart School Spotlight On:

Mindi Craddock by Whitney Wolf

When you walk into Sacred Heart most days, you will be greeted by a jovial, animated, and incredibly knowledgeable woman at the desk in our front office. Her name is Mindi Craddock and her roots at Sacred Heart run deep.

Originally from Westfield, Massachusetts, Mindi relocated to the Winnetka area – with three children under the age of 5 - in 2007, when her husband accepted a job that was simply too perfect to turn down. Immediately, the ever-so-familiar quandary ensued: Public School or Private?

Mindi's husband Tom put in the hard sell for Sacred Heart, having attended – along with eight other siblings – throughout the '80s. A self-proclaimed "public-school kid" Mindi was not so enthusiastic about the idea.

"I said 'no, let's do public school.' I believe in our public schools, they're some of the best in the country. He said let's just give it a try until Kindergarten and then revisit the conversation." So, they enrolled Jack (now 21) in the Junior Kindergarten program and it wasn't long before their second son, Ryan (now 19) would follow suit, and then their youngest son, Paul joined the Sacred Heart community as well.

The night before Jack's Kindergarten graduation, as the family happily prepared to celebrate their oldest son's first educational milestone – Mindi got The Call: It was cancer.

"So this community...we're talking faculty, staff, parents, parishioners – everyone was SO AMAZING through my battle which lasted about a year. People gave my parents a place to live so they could help with the boys, meals, shoveling the driveway, giving kids rides to school, everything - just all kinds of support. I knew after that there was no way I was ever leaving this school."

"I remembered thinking, one night in the shower, that if I didn't beat it and I died - my kids were going to be okay. They'd be taken care of here—at Sacred Heart."

Thankfully and through the grace of God, Mindi triumphed over her cancer and now, 16 years later, with the boys sailing successfully through the esteemed doors of Loyola Academy, continuing on to their first-choice colleges, Mindi stays put at Sacred Heart.



"I started my journey at Sacred Heart because of Tom's experience here - but I stayed because of my own."

Mindi has worn many hats during her long-running tenure at Sacred Heart. From "Room Mom" to Parent Association to Board Member. She participated as a substitute teacher and worked in Marketing and Development for the Parish and later, the school.

Last year while subbing in Jr. High math, she was approached by Assistant Principal, Jennifer Sullivan about a possible job opportunity. "I had secretly always wanted to work in the office. I don't know why! I didn't feel like I could do full-time subbing, but the position they were looking to fill was actually for part-time in the office so it was the perfect fit... And I love it."

To describe the culture at Sacred Heart, Mindi is quick to sing praise for the community here - a place where everyone looks after one another and supports each other inside and outside of the school.

"One of the things I've always said – to use marketing terms - it feels like our *product*, is an eighth grader. I always felt like Sacred Heart cared most about who these kids were when they graduated vs. *what* – it's not so much about being labeled as the straight-A student, or the athlete, or the legacy. Who you are as a person matters most here: service, being a good friend, being a good son or daughter, and eventually moving on to being a great member of the community."

Engaging Children's Hearts

This year, Divine Mercy Children's Ministry is blessed with 20 teen aides! Only four short years ago, we had five! These teens arrive bright and early on Sunday mornings ready to work. And, work they do. They support the catechists by setting up activities, reading to children, lending an extra hand to a child who needs it, cleaning up, and more. In the older grades, our teen aides even lead small faith sharing groups, passing along their own faith to tweens who relate so well to those only a few years ahead of them. The teens are willing to help in any capacity and their presence makes a huge difference in our ministry. On the rare occasion that they are sick or cannot come, what we hear most often is, "The session was great but we sure missed our teen aide!" And, they often want their teen aide to follow them from year to year!

When Bishop Casey confirmed our children last year, he noted that 85 percent of those confirmed do not continue to practice the Catholic faith. He urged the candidates to "be the number 16!" These teens are. They are freshman, sophomores, juniors and stressed-out seniors balancing classwork and college applications. They are from New Trier, Loyola, and North Shore Country Day. They are in sports, theatre and all kinds of other clubs and extracurriculars. And they are the future of our church!

Here are the Divine Mercy Teen Aides 2023-2024:

Ellie Shafer - PK/K	Patrick Boyle - 5th
Sophia Puljic - PK/K	Joey Papanicholas - 6th
Elle Huss - 1st	Jimmy White - 7th
Isabella Ryerson - 1st	Jameson Rick - 8th
Nora Hartvigsen - 1st	Lila Hernandez - FFC PK/K
Norah Luzadder - 1st	Ellie Hanley - FFC PK/K
Sofia Norbot - 2nd	Danny Hession - FFC 3-6th
Evan Pagliaro - 2nd	Ellie Carlson - CLOW*
Olivia Ty - 2nd	Eleanor Thanner - CLOW*
Lily Hartvigsen - 3rd	<u>Christmas Pageant:</u>
Owen Rick - 3rd	Nelson Goodrich and
Rachele Lombardi - 4th	Connor Lolli
Johnny Wallach - 5th	

Please thank them for their service when you see them, and keep them in your prayers!

*CLOW = Children's Liturgy of the Word

We captured some of the aides in photos from last year...



Johnny Wallach helping in 5th grade this year.



Nora Hartvigsen PK/K



Lily Hartvigsen 2nd grade



Norah Luzadder helping in 1st grade this year.



Sophia Puljic (left)/PK-K



Evan Rick helping in 3rd grade this year.



Olivia Ty/1st grade



Jimmy White / 7th Grade - Helping with the Bible Blessing



Elle Huss (back)/ 4th grade

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