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“Missionary Disciples” is a publication of the Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks that serves northern and western Alaska. Its purpose is to provide a regular opportunity for all ministries throughout the Diocese to share information so our tremendous diversity may enrich our common mission of service to the people of our Diocese.

If you have questions or suggestions, please contact David Schienle at the Chancery at (907) 374-9500 or library@cbna.org.

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Cover photo: Bishop Zielinski baptizing Easton at Sacred Heart Church in Emmonak, AK.

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In September, Bishop Chad Zielinski visited St. Patrick Catholic Church in Utqiagvik, formerly known as Barrow, the northernmost community in Alaska. Utqiagvik is located north of the Arctic Circle and is home to about 4,500 people. More than half of residents are Inupiat Eskimo Natives, who have lived off the land for thousands of years.
Friday, September 13

Today started early so I could make a 5:30 am flight from Fairbanks to Anchorage. When I arrived in Anchorage, I had to move quickly since the flight was already boarding for Utqiagvik, once known as Barrow, the northernmost city in the United States. It was a full flight, with many heading back to work on the North Slope, where the bulk of Alaska’s oil is produced. Many people who work on the slope live elsewhere and fly to the far north to work two weeks on, two weeks off. The long break is nice, but those with families also face the challenge of being separated from loved ones for a long period too.

I arrived in Utqiagvik about midmorning and met Fr. Thomas Sagili, a missionary priest from India who has served in the bush for the past two years. He took me to St. Patrick Catholic Church, where I reconnected to the internet and rebooted my cell phone. I saw a text from a family in another village asking for prayers for medical issues. I am deeply touched and humbled when people ask me to pray for them. I think they believe my prayers are stronger because I’m a bishop, but the truth is their belief in the power of prayer strengthens my faith.

After lunch, we took a walk. The shore of the Arctic Ocean is just a few blocks from the church and Fr. Thomas and I had a villager take a picture of us there. He saw our collars and asked if we were priests. Fr. Thomas explained that he lived in Utqiagvik and I was the visiting bishop. The man, Willie, welcomed us most graciously. I noticed he was Inupiaq, so I asked him to help us pronounce Utqiagvik. I botched the word a few times and Willie laughed. I think he was impressed I was making an attempt.

Willie was in his
early 40s and has lived in Utqiagvik his entire life. We chatted about climate changes and he mentioned there should already be snow on the ground by mid-September. (In fact, I had visited the village three years ago in August and it had already snowed.) Now, the polar ice field that usually isn’t far from shore has moved 150 miles away, something that has never happened in recorded history. Willie talked about how the warming temperatures were impacting the migration patterns of the whales, seals, walrus, and sea life they feed on. It was interesting to hear his gritty, real-life perspective on what is usually just a theoretical discussion in the lower 48 states. Willie was not being political, just sharing what he observed as someone who literally depends on the animals of the sea to survive.

Willie is a member of the local Presbyterian church and told us they were gathering to work on translating the Old Testament into Inupiaq. What an incredible undertaking! Father Thomas knew their pastor, having worked with him on some efforts that encouraged the cooperation of local church leaders. I shared with Willie that my grandparents were long-time Presbyterians and had helped found their church more than 40 years earlier.

We continued our walk, then stopped at a coffee shack, where I purchased a small latte for $7. We were at the “Top of the World” and the prices clearly reflected it! We ended up at the local supermarket where we met two families from St. Patrick’s. They were welcoming and happy to hear I was there to celebrate Confirmations on Sunday. The supermarket was surprisingly well-stocked with produce and fresh meats, but the prices were significantly higher even than what I see in Fairbanks or the lower 48 states. I bought a can of tuna for more than $2 and a small can of mixed nuts was more than $11. It only takes a few items to cross the $100 mark.

Mass was at 5:30 PM and I preached about the Exaltation of the Cross. The power of the Cross is driven by God’s desire to draw closer to humanity through our redemption on the Cross. The sacrifice on Calvary was connected to the offering of the Last Supper and this sacrifice is re-presented in the Holy Eucharist every Mass. And when we hear, “Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours will be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father,” we are invited to offer our own sacrifice along with the priest.

What is that sacrifice? As a priest, do I pause, reflect, and truly offer myself as a sacrifice for the people of God gathered to worship? Do those gathered at Mass reach within and offer themselves as a gift to the Father, as Christ did on the Cross? God truly wants everything within us, I told those at Mass—our joys, thanksgivings, struggles, sins, failures, traumas, and petitions. He wants all of it on the altar. Christ draws all to Himself and through our offering of the bread and wine, He transforms those gifts into His own Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

The stuff inside of us that we offer Christ also is transformed. Jesus knows we can’t do it on our own, so He offers himself in the Eucharist as food for the journey. We consume Christ to become more like Him and to be united as brothers and sisters. That connection through Christ’s Body and Blood runs deeper than any genetic connection, I told the Inupiat, Filipinos, Samoans, and Tongans at Mass. What smiles the people had! Many said they found the knowledge that we are so profoundly connected to Christ and to one another hopeful and encouraging.

Saturday, September 14,
The sun peeked through...
the window at about 7 am. The village is losing seven minutes of daylight per day at this time of year. Most Alaskans get excited about the winter solstice, which is when we start gaining daylight en route to our “Midnight Sun.”

I spent Saturday catching up on emails and putting the final touches on my homily for the next day. I also called my family back in Michigan, since the four-hour time difference makes it difficult to catch up during the week. I prayed my rosary while walking around the village enjoying the cold breeze sweeping in from the Arctic Ocean. The temperature was a balmy 39 degrees, according to locals, who kept commenting on how warm it was. I saw one man get into his vehicle in shorts and a t-shirt!

Father Thomas and I celebrated a vigil Mass this evening. Again, I reiterated how much God desires to be close to us, an invitation to a relationship that is always there. All it takes to say yes to that invitation is a simple turning toward Him with a contrite heart, especially through the sacraments.

### Sunday, September 15

Father Thomas and I rose early to have some quiet time before the Blessed Sacrament before the activity began for the Confirmation Mass. The candidates arrived and I was impressed with their attentiveness to their dress, polite attitude, and seriousness of their faith. They talked about getting homework done and going to college. Utqiagvik is a growing community with elementary, middle, and high schools having around 500 students. Interestingly, rural Alaskan communities are trending younger, with 40% of villagers now being under age 18.

I told the Confirmation candidates I would ask the Holy Spirit to give them a double-dose of fortitude to live their Christian faith in a world that seems so counter to the message of the Gospel. I encouraged them to believe with unwavering hope that in their yes to Christ, he would radiate His beauty, goodness, and truth. Just before the final blessing, I had the candidates come forward and gave them a cross that had been purchased in Rome. It was a cross of the Good Shepherd, with an imprint of a shepherd with a sheep wrapped around his neck and the 99 in the background. I explained this was a smaller version of the pectoral cross worn by Pope Francis. Know that Christ always has His eyes on you, I reminded them, so you are never lost.

St. Patrick’s is attended by a unique mix of Inupiat, Filipino, Samoan, and Tongan parishioners, so I was excited about the array of ethnic foods that were sure to grace the celebratory potluck after the Mass. As I was about to offer grace before the meal, I turned to see the newly confirmed making up the line of servers. Instead of being first in line for food, they had instead decided to be servants to their community. Theirs was a profoundly moving witness.

That afternoon, Fr. Thomas and I attended an extended family’s celebration for a young man who was confirmed. The parents’ marriage was a merging of cultures from the extreme north to the south. The mother, Crystal, is proudly descended from a long-time Inupiaq family in Utqiagvik. Her husband, Tino, is from Samoa. Five years as a bishop in northern Alaska has opened my mind and heart to the beauty of Inupiaq culture. My time in seminary also gave me a taste of Samoan culture, since we had about ten Samoan seminarians who shared their island tribal culture with our community. I saw these two cultures blended in a most beautiful unity at this family home in the far north.

I spent a lot of time talking with Crystal’s mother and father, Gene. Gene has always lived in Barrow and spent his youth in a sod house about 40 miles from the village. In summer, his family was quite nomadic, moving around and living in tents to follow the game. When he was six, his family had a house next to the current location of the Catholic church, which was then just a quonset hut given to the parish by the military.

As a young man, Gene suffered a severe injury from a black powder explosion that caused extensive burns. Father Cunningham, the Catholic priest in Barrow at the time, accompanied him to the hospital in Anchorage since he was fluent in Inupiaq. Gene was in the hospital for several months and Fr. Cunningham visited...
him every day, translating back and forth between the doctors and nurses about his care. Gene grew up Presbyterian, but he was deeply grateful for Fr. Cunningham’s loving care all those years ago and it had given him a great respect for Catholics. His story was a testimony to a priest who had a true missionary heart for God’s people, no matter their faith tradition.

Gene had been a whaling captain who hunted whales for more than 40 years. Whale hunting is not done for sport but is an important and necessary part of the Inupiat’s traditional way of life. After men harvest a whale, they pause and thank God for providing the animal to feed their families. I have witnessed this numerous times among Native Alaskans whenever they harvest a moose or fish. They are deeply grateful for the food and respectful of the animals’ sacrifice. The Inupiat primarily harvest bowhead whales, huge animals that are up to 60 feet long.

During his career, Gene was influential in the International Whaling Commission, the global body charged with the conservation of whales and oversight of whaling. Politics aside, whalers in Russia and the United States work well together and even share how many of a particular whale they harvest to ensure good stewardship.

Gene is retired, but I saw a photo on the wall with him and his young son on a whaling expedition. Today, his son has taken over as captain and carries on their traditional way of life to the next generation.

Standing there, surrounded by these amazing people whose way of life is so unique and admirable, I found myself once again humbled and blessed. What a gift it is to be a shepherd in northern Alaska!

St. Patrick’s newly confirmed about to serve food at the potluck after Mass.
Faith and Family Formation

Fred Villa
Coordinator for Faith and Family Formation
Administrator for the Diocesan Safe Environment Program

Safe Environment Update

Local safe environment coordinators have been identified and will be trained to check the status of volunteers’ safe environment training and background checks. This will provide local verification of volunteers’ compliance to serve in the diocese. If you need to begin the training and background check process, go to www.safeandsacred-fairbanks.org, or www.cbna.org, or contact the Safe Environment Program office at (907) 374-9511 for more information.

Tips for Traditions

We are submitting “Tips for Traditions” to your local parish bulletins to provide ideas on how households can create new and regular ways of incorporating small actions into meaningful habits and recognize Christ in our daily lives. If you have any suggestions or would like to share some of your favorite family traditions, please email the Office of Faith and Family Formation: family@cbna.org.

Feast and Faith for Young Adults

The October Feast and Faith gathering was held on October 8th at Miguel’s Restaurant in Fairbanks. Approximately thirty young adults, 18-35ish year-olds participated. October’s gathering was an opportunity to learn from Fr. Robert Fath about traditions in the Catholic church including personal familial traditions, and new ones shared by these young adults. The conversation was both enlightening and inspiring. Come out and meet other young adults and get connected with various activities happening across the diocese.

Next gathering:
November 12th, 6-8 PM.
Fairbanks Regional Council

Fr. Tom Kuffel will be meeting with the Fairbanks Regional Council on November 12th at Immaculate Conception Church from 6-9 PM. Representatives from each of the area parishes will come together and plan for upcoming events including Fr. James Sichko’s presentations titled “60 Minutes with Jesus”, being offered November 17-19 between 7-8 PM. This is a great way to prepare us to be a blessing to others as we enter the upcoming Advent Season.

Interior Regional Council

Bro. Bob Ruzicka is meeting monthly with a regional planning committee from the Middle Yukon to prepare for a “Family Conference” in Galena, in the Spring of 2021. More information to come.

Catholic Engaged Encounter

Catholic Engaged Encounter is an in-depth, private, personal, marriage preparation experience within the context of Catholic faith and values. Catholic Engaged Encounter is a weekend retreat away with other engaged couples with plenty of time together to dialogue honestly and intensively about their prospective lives -- their strengths and weaknesses, desires, ambitions, goals, their attitudes about money, sex, children, family, their role in the church and society--in a face to face way.

Couples who are preparing for the sacrament of Marriage should speak with their priest for registration information. For more information, you may contact Deacon Sean and Jodi Stack (451-4382) or Tim and Jill Woster (488-5648).

Knights of Columbus

We are Catholic men building a bridge back to faith. There is much work to be done in this world, good work. Necessary work and that’s what the Knights do, every day. Assisting the sick and the disabled, protecting those who can’t protect themselves, whether they are next door or halfway around the world. This is the journey we are on, our path.

We do it to be better husbands, fathers, sons, neighbors, and Catholics. We invest our time, our effort, and our resources into our values: charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism.

We come from many places and backgrounds, from many stages in our lives; but we are all of one faith. A fraternity of men striving to better ourselves and our world.

It’s one thing to say who you are. It’s another to live it. To put your values into action. That’s what we do at the Knights of Columbus. That’s who we are.

If you are interested in joining the Knights, go to www.kofc.org, or visit your local Knights Council.
In mid-October, the professional staff in the Y-K region of the diocese gathered for three days of professional enrichment. The group chose two topics that affect their ministry. The topics of Social Media and Suicide were discussed.

David Schienle helped us get a handle on using Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as well as reviewing the diocesan policies on social media. The staff was very aware that social media is the way to reach many people and that we need to learn how to use it effectively. With laptops in hand, we were invited to set up pages, insert graphics and post information.

A day was also spent on addressing suicide as this region has a high suicide rate. The staff watched a webinar on facts, warning signs, responses, and resources on suicide. It was then time to talk about the pastoral care of those that attempt suicide and the families and the care of friends effected by suicide.

Ann Nickerson, the director of Stephens Ministries for the Diocese shared her experience and pastoral care tips. A discussion followed on how the region can respond in mercy and with compassion and yet get the message across that suicide is not acceptable.

But, it was not all work. Some of the staff were able to sky dive and downhill ski through virtual reality. One evening was dedicated to “organized joy,” the game, Categories and Pictionary provided fun and some interesting learning about each other.
David Schienle presenting the possibilities of using social media in ministry.

Fr. Aiden enjoying a closing song commonly sung in his home diocese.

Fr. Stan Jasek experiencing sky diving from a VR headset.

Fr. Tom Provinsal, S.J., drawing his clue, while playing Pictonary.

The Y-K Staff working on their laptops during the social media training.

The Y-K Staff participating in the evenings “organized joy” playing the game Category.
Meet Iva Chapman (you met her husband – Hot Wheel Gary last issue). Each year Iva donates yards and yards of fleece to the Y-K Region. Iva’s generosity enables the women of the region to make blankets, jackets, kuspaqs, warm hats and gloves for their families. Iva has been a sower most of her life doing many projects for the homeless of the city where she lives. When she was unable to do as much sewing she sent many of her projects to the children of Alaska and now sends material, lots of material, to keep all warm.

At a recent feed, young children were roaming the hall showing off their new jackets made from the fleece Iva sent and a pattern Iva used to make jackets for children down south. Many mothers are grateful for Iva’s generosity. Thank you, Iva!!
Update from Fr. Gerald Ornowski, M.I.C.

The Provincial Superior of the Marians in the US, called me here to discuss my future. The outcome of the negotiations is that I will be permanently assigned to our national headquarters. I take this as God’s will expressed through my superiors. The Marian Headquarters are a beautiful place and the community is most welcoming.

My 35 years in Alaska have been a blessing, and you, my loved ones, have been a huge part of that. I thank you more than words can say. I will be coming to Fairbanks in early January to tie things up and say farewell to all.

Love and blessings,
Father Gerald.

Job Openings

Director of Mission Outreach

The Diocese of Fairbanks is seeking a Director of Mission Outreach. This position is responsible for the overall messaging, general development initiatives and stewardship efforts for the Diocese of Fairbanks. Manages and directs diocesan solicitation, development, and expression of gratitude to donors. Oversees the content and ensures that the message of the Bishop is consistent in all communications of the diocese to include social media, direct mailings and published content. The Director of Mission Outreach position performs all duties and responsibilities in alignment with the mission, vision, and values of the Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks. This position is full time and benefits eligible and will remain open until filled. For more information, please contact humanresources@cbna.org.

Accounting Technician

The Diocese of Fairbanks is seeking an Accounting Technician for 30 hours a week. This position will be responsible for supporting the Chief Financial Officer for the Diocese of Fairbanks by providing accounting support in multiple areas. Primary duties are Accounts Payable, including the receipt and accountability of all recurring and non-recurring invoices for the diocese, credit card invoices, and check runs. In addition, this position would be responsible for direct parish support. Applicant must be proficient in Quick Books in order to facilitate the setup and running of each parish. This position is benefits eligible. The Accounting Payable position performs all duties and responsibilities in alignment with the mission, vision and values of the Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks. This position will remain open until filled. For more information, please contact humanresources@cbna.org.
During the first weekend of October, a Rosary Congress was held at Immaculate Conception Church in Fairbanks. The three-day event consisted of praying the rosary and divine chaplet, talks, Mass, and adoration. This year’s Rosary Congress was dedicated to praying for persecuted and suffering Christians. The following are excerpts from a talk given by Deacon Bob Barnard on the topic.

Is there any question, any doubt that the Catholic faith is under trial, persecution, and division? Most of us have not yet felt it, but we can see it around the world, in the Middle East, China, North Korea, and other places in the world. All of this is represented in our Knights of Columbus icon Our Lady, Help of Persecuted Christians.

It depicting the Blessed Mother, with the Child Jesus over her heart, spreading her protective mantle around a representative gathering of recent Christian martyrs-men and women, young and old, from East and West; priests religious and laypersons. When we look at the figures huddled under Mary’s royal blue mantle, we see representatives from around the world and from various Churches and ethnicities. But each also, and unfortunately, represents so many, many more persecuted Christians. Many known and a vast many more unknown. Tertullian says, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

Here in our part of the world the trials, persecution,
and division is more subtle; we see attacks of faith, attempts to break the seal of the Confessional through unjust laws, questioning of faith of people in public service, calls from people who have no connection or understanding of the Church for the Church to change teachings on Marriage and abortion.

It also comes through in the perpetuation of misunderstandings of the Catholic faith, both intentional and unintentional. When I was going around to different protestant churches in the 1980s, I would hear some truly bizarre interpretations of our Catholic Faith, that even at that time when I didn’t know much about my Catholic faith what I was hearing was so out there I knew that it was not right. It caused me to go back and find out what it is that the Catholic Church teaches on many of these misconstrued interpretations. And guess what happened when I began studying and researching what it is that the Church teaches. What I realized what the graces we receive through the Church are especially the Sacramental life of the Church, and I came screaming back to the Church, went to confession, began attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist, had our Marriage blessed in the Catholic Church, and began my reconversion to Christ our Lord, which I need to do every day.

Even in the Church, we see trial, persecution, and division. Few, if even anyone, were prepared and ready for the revelation of the evil that was done to children and adults by members of the clergy. The majority of clergy in the Catholic Church were just as shocked as the rest of the world. We were not ready or prepared for that. And this places another layer of hurt; the victims and families were hurt, the faithful were hurt, the majority of clergy who are innocent were hurt. And to say it has caused divisions is an extreme understatement.

**Trial, Persecution, and Division**

We need to be ready for the trial, persecution, and division which will come our way in the life of our Catholic faith. But how do we prepare, how can we be ready? Jesus warns us what is coming. Our first Pope, Saint Peter says, “But even if you do suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence; and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.” (1 Peter 3:14-16)

How do we love? How many of you have received mercy and forgiveness from Christ our Lord? If you have received mercy and forgiveness from the Lord as you attest, what are you doing to bring Christ’s mercy and forgiveness to our broken and hurting world, to our broken and hurting communities? Unless you’ve been living under a rock for the last hundred or so years you can see the brokenness and hurt in need of healing, in need of Christ’s mercy and forgiveness. It is our job as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ to bring mercy and forgiveness beyond the walls of this Church into our families, our neighborhoods, our communities.

**Mercy and Forgiveness**

Through the mercy and forgiveness we receive, we are strengthened to bring that mercy and forgiveness through charity and Divine love. Again, we can turn to the Catholic Church and the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Through the corporal works of mercy we imitate Christ and do the works He did: feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, bury the dead, give alms to the poor. You will need mercy and forgiveness in doing these works; your efforts may be rejected, questioned, and put down, and without mercy and forgiveness you might become discouraged, even despairing. But with strength in the mercy and forgiveness, you receive from Christ our Lord you will do these works with joy.

Through the spiritual works of mercy we also imitate Christ our Lord in His mercy and forgiveness in justice; To instruct the ignorant, To counsel the doubtful, To admonish sinners, To bear wrongs patiently, To forgive offenses willingly, To comfort the
afflicted, To pray for the living and the dead. Again, it will require mercy and forgiveness, for these, too, maybe rejected, questioned, or put down, as were my early attempts to correct some of the misconceptions of some Protestants. You know you are following Christ in His mercy and forgiveness when you follow what Saint Peter tells us with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear.

So expect the trials, the persecutions, the divisions, and prepare yourself through the Sacramental life of the Church to strengthen you in the power of Christ our Lord to bring mercy and forgiveness through charity and in love to our broken and hurting world. If we understood forgiveness we would not hesitate to run to the Sacrament of Reconciliation where we encounter Christ’s forgiveness through the power of the ministerial priesthood. What’s more, if we truly understood the graces we receive through Christ’s forgiveness in this Sacrament, we would not hesitate to tell others about the healing and saving power of Christ’s forgiveness, Christ’s love.

**Saint Maria Goretti**

Saint Maria Goretti also showed this when on a hot afternoon in July she was sitting at the top of the stairs of her house, mending a shirt. She was not quite 12-years old. A cart stopped outside, and a neighbor, 18-year-old Alessandro, ran up the stairs. He seized her and pulled her into a bedroom. She struggled and tried to call for help. “No, God does not wish it,” she cried out. “It is a sin. You would go to hell for it.” Alessandro began striking her blindly with a long dagger.

Maria was taken to a hospital. Her last hours were marked by the simple compassion of the good—concern about where her mother would sleep, the forgiveness of her murderer, and her devout welcoming of Viaticum, her last Holy Communion. She died about 24 hours after the attack.

Alessandro was sentenced to 30 years in prison. For a long time, he was unrepentant and surly. One night he had a dream of Maria gathering flowers and offering them to him. His life changed. When he was released after 27 years, his first act was to beg the forgiveness of Maria’s mother.

Devotion to the young martyr grew, miracles were worked, and in less than half a century she was canonized. In 1950, at Maria’s canonization, a 66-year-old Alessandro Serenelli knelt among the quarter-million people and cried tears of joy. It was one of the largest crowds ever assembled for canonization which symbolized the reaction of millions touched by the simple story of the forgiveness of Maria Goretti.

**We are the Laborers**

Is there any doubt harvest of hurt and broken people is indeed plentiful? Is there any doubt that the laborers in forgiveness are few? We are the laborers called to repentance to seek forgiveness. And we are the laborers called to bring forgiveness to broken and hurting people, to a broken and hurting world. Every day we must toil in the vineyard of the Lord. We are the laborers called for to be sent into that vineyard, especially in teaching forgiveness. We first toil by example.
showing forgiveness working in our own life, growing in forgiveness, staying close to the Sacraments of the Church. We also toil in talking about the grace and power of forgiveness. Our broken and hurting world is our missionary territory for forgiveness. Only forgiveness can heal hurts, injustice, and brokenness. We, you and I, are called to go out into the vineyard to receive and spread forgiveness. This is the active waiting we are to do to save souls!

Forgiveness is the only way to heal the hurt, injustice, and brokenness in our families, in our world, and even in our Church. We have a choice of leaving behind a legacy of resentment, bitterness, and hatred, or we can leave behind a legacy of mercy, forgiveness, and love. And that legacy can begin now with our repentance and with our forgiveness. Forgiveness is the way to love. Forgiveness is the way to Christ. Forgiveness is the way to Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Forgiveness!


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**Team Building Workshop**

*by David Schienle, Coordinator*

The Chancery staff participated in a two-day workshop focused on team building, facilitated by Claude Blanc. Staff voiced suggestions on changes that could increase teamwork. Common suggestions were ways to improve how offices communicate within the Chancery. As a result, the format of the biweekly staff meeting has changed allowing short updates from all offices.
Well for Mityana, Uganda

Three years ago, Lina Heinrichs, a college student from St. Raphael’s Catholic Parish, became aware of a project in Mityana, Uganda, that needed a strong organizing volunteer. Lina learned more about the project needs and contacted Vicent Walusimba in Uganda, who was the project leader. She discovered that the two main focuses of the project were helping to educate the poor children in Mityana who don’t have access to school and access to a clean water supply. She spent most of her summer break organizing and structuring the fledgling non-profit. When she returned, Lina was motivated to respond to God’s call and the needs of the people of Mityana.
She organized a fundraising dinner and presentation about the Mityana Project at St. Raphael's and thus began our parish support for *Better Lives Mityana*. Lina returned to college where she recruited and coordinated sponsors to help pay for individual children’s education and continued to help with organization. Locally, parishioner, Gloria Slagle kept the fund raisers happening through pancake breakfasts prepared by our Knights of Columbus and personal appeals. Both Lina and Gloria became good friends with Vicent and his family. Then, Vicent Walusimba’s wife became ill during her pregnancy. Vicent explained that she had typhoid fever due to their unsanitary drinking water supply. The Mityana area district and other villages did not have access to clean water. Vicent’s wife was not the only one to become ill. Gloria shifted her fundraising efforts to fund digging a well for clean water supply in Mityana. When Gloria’s father passed away, he left her a collection of coins. Gloria, with her husband Tom, decided to donate most of the value of the coins to help dig a well in Mityana. Along with other parish donations, Vicent hired a company and the well was constructed. In September 2019, the community of Mityana gathered to celebrate as clean water began to flow from the newly constructed well … and, what a celebration it was! Praise and thanks be to God! Vicent Walusimba’s wife has recovered and is doing well and they have a new baby boy.

Currently, St. Raphael’s is fundraising to provide a second well, with an estimated cost of $8,000, to supply clean water in area villages in the Mityana District. If you are interested in more information about the *Better...*
Lives Mityana Project, contact Gloria Slagle at st.clare4@gmail.com or Lina Heinrichs at lina.j.heinrichs@gmail.com.

Zimkids Orphan Foundation

In 2005, Dennis Gaboury, who was living in Fairbanks with his wife Ellie, was invited to Saint Raphael Catholic Parish to discuss his experience of being a survivor of abuse by a Catholic priest as an 11-year-old in his home parish in New York and how his life was changed forever. But Dennis sought healing, and eventually, his life would move from one of surviving to one of blessed thriving.

Later that year, Dennis and Ellie moved to South Africa, where Ellie had taken a fellowship at the University. Dennis set out to explore Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, where he found that ‘life on the other side of the tracks’ was vastly different from children in affluent parts of town. He discovered an entire community of children who had lost one or both of their parents to AIDS. The children were living with relatives but with poor nutrition and no medical help. He discovered that the children had no money for toys and were making them from discarded objects. Thus began a gesture of outreach and loving-kindness that has grown into a foundation ministry serving orphans and run by orphans.

To help the children, Dennis decided to have a contest where the children would make their best dolls and Dennis recruited local businesses to provide prizes. The contest was a huge success with over 500 children participating. Dennis took some of the dolls with him to New York to an art dealer who said they were wonderful examples of African art. Dennis had the idea to have the children make dolls which he would bring to the US to sell through donation. Dennis would then see that the child’s household would get 100% of the money for food and medicine. Each buyer received a biography of the child who made the doll and the child would write a thank you note to the buyer. This proved very successful and the life and health of the children improved vastly.

In 2007, the organization of Zimkids was formed. Over time, Dennis, and one of the orphans from Zimkids, Tinashe Tizzie
Basa, who is now the current Director, visited St. Raphael’s six times. Both have made visits to St. Nicholas, Immaculate Conception, and Sacred Heart Cathedral. Parishioners have been generous in their support as well. Both Dennis and Tinashe have traveled to other locations throughout the US to make presentations and sell dolls. In more recent years, the children have begun making other items out of wire, beads, and strips from soda cans. Over the years, St. Raphael’s parishioners, prompted by the efforts of Gloria Slagle, have purchased dolls and toys made by the children, bought cinnamon rolls made and sold by parishioners for donations, and hosted and supported pancake breakfasts, prepared by the Knights of Columbus to gather donations for Zimkids. St. Raphael’s parishioners feel blessed to support and be a part of such a wonderful organization. Dennis and Tinashe have become part of the parish community and are welcomed as family.

In 2012, Zimkids moved into their own center, built by senior orphans who laid brick, built roofs, installed plumbing, welded desks and erected solar panels that power the entire facility. The surrounding property is used for a sports field, obstacle course, and greenhouse, all of which are maintained by the children. In 2014, Zimkids opened a pre-school, run by alumni, to give local orphans a head start, and by enrolling non-orphans. Zimkids has grown into Zimkids Foundation and is a wonderful charitable organization, and Dennis Gaboury, a blessed and loving man, is thriving in his beautiful and loving efforts to improve the lives of the orphaned children in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Zimkids appreciates receiving recurring monthly donations which help ensure they can continue to feed 300 orphans a day. If you are interested in more information about Zimkids Foundation contact www.zimkidsorphantrust.org or dennis@zimkids.com or contact Gloria Slagle at st.clare4@gmail.com.

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**Mental Health First Aid**

_by Rev. Tom Kuffel_

_Pastor of Immaculate Conception Church, Fairbanks, AK._

Love Inc., presented a seminar on October 23-24, on mental health dealing with the pressing problems of depression, addiction, suicide, abuse, and other divesting consequences of mental illness, especially here in Alaska. They reported the sad statistics of mental illnesses:

- 123 Suicides take place daily.
- 630,000 deaths have occurred from drug overdose from 1999—2016.
- 1 out of 5 adults live with mental illness.

These staggering statistics are merely the tip of the problem. As Christians, we are called to heal, help, and bring hope to those suffering from mental illness. Yet, we must first be healthy if we want to bring help and healing to others. Next, we to have to be a person of hope despite the hopelessness that many people face. Finally, we have to be informed of our Catholic teachings in helping those who suffer. Ultimately, we must be
men and women of intense prayer. Without prayer, we cannot even begin to minister to those suffering.

• We cannot be too harsh on those suffering from addiction.
• We cannot be too demanding on those who suffer from depression or victimization.
• We cannot be intimidated by those suffering from suicidal thoughts for we know.

God is the Father of Mercies Who comes to heal. Listen to what our Faith teaches us: “Grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering, or torture can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide” (CCC. # 2282) and “We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives” (CCC. # 2283).

So too with those who suffer from an addiction, depression, victimization, and other mental illnesses; that is why we show compassion.

Compassion literally means to suffer with the other. We who have taken responsibility for our lives, we who have overcome our mental anguish and illnesses, know how to work with those who are yet unhealed.

Healing is rooted in our body, mind, and soul. You cannot heal one without the other. We, who have been healed by Christ’s strength, embrace our sufferings as He did; and growing through them to overcome them, become the mentors and teachers to those still chained. We realize: I cannot heal unless I am healed.

We become the light, the truth, and the way to those living in the darkness of mental illness, but our light does not come from my power, but from the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within me.

The Holy Spirit gives us self-respect. It prompts us to seek virtue in all things, practicing:

• Justice when it comes to irresponsibility.
• Temperance when it comes to over-indulgence.
• Prudence when it comes to irrational and immoral decisions.
• Fortitude when it comes to anxiety and fear.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, long ago, re-iterates the power of practicing these cardinal virtues not only to sanctify ourselves but in reality to become an instrument of sanctification for others. “Whoever is in Christ is a new creation; the old has passed away. ’Now by the new creation, Paul means the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the heart that is pure and blameless, free of all malice, wickedness or shamefulness. For when the soul has come to hate sin and has delivered itself as far as it can to the power of virtue, it undergoes a transformation by receiving the grace of the Spirit. Then it is healed, restored and made wholly new” (PG 46, 295-298; Office of Reading Week, 26, Saturday).

God infuses divine life in us when we seek to live a virtuous life. Today, we begin our journey of virtue; so we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can change the face of the Earth: We can change the lives of those we love!
60 Minutes with Jesus
by
Fr. Jim Sichko

Nov 17 – 19
Sacred Heart Cathedral
7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Confessions Heard

Random Acts of Kindness Ministry

The Regional Council of Fairbanks invites you to come and experience Fr. Jim and his ministry to reach out to all – including You!
This Mission prepares us to be Thankful for the many blessings in our lives and to prepare us to be a blessing to others as we enter this Holy Season of Advent!

About Fr. Jim
Fr Jim Sichko is a full-time evangelist and motivational speaker based in the Diocese of Lexington, KY.
February of 2016, Pope Francis commissioned Fr Jim as one of his Papal Missionaries of Mercy of which there are only 1000 in the world, 100 in the United States.
Since becoming a priest, Fr. Jim has made headlines for random acts of generosity and kindness, giving away thousands of dollars to people at the grocery stores, on the streets and especially to those most in need.
He has met and worked with many celebrities and was honored by the U.S. Congress for the ministry provided to him.
Fr. Jim takes real life experiences and ties those experiences into the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.
Known for his presentations entitled: "60 Minutes For Jesus", each talk is geared for all in a family household with no exceptions.
Missionary Spotlight

From Sultry Nigeria to the Frozen North

Father Yakubu Aiden

Father Yakubu Aiden is a 34-year-old missionary priest who came to Alaska in 2017 from war-torn Nigeria. Today, he ministers to mostly Yup’ik Catholics who live in St. Mary’s, Mountain Village, and Pilot Station, three remote villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region.

What strongly influenced your faith growing up?

My family and village were my strongest Catholic influences. Our village, Wula-Mango, is 95% Catholic and our church is the only one. My father actually wasn’t raised Catholic; his family practiced the African traditional religion. When he was about 10, he left the village and went into town, where he lived with some Irish Catholic missionaries. (Among my people, boys are allowed to be independent at around 10; girls at 15.) The missionaries educated him and eventually, he became Catholic. When he was 20, he went back to his home village and married my mother, who later converted to Catholicism. They had nine children and raised us all to be faithful to the Church. My father is now retired, and is basically a full-time Catholic, volunteering for almost every ministry in the parish.

How did you know you were called to be a priest?

I didn’t. My father, however, believed I was meant to be a priest and insisted I go to junior seminary (what you call middle and high school). I didn’t want to go, but figured I could make some good friends at the school and I did. When I graduated, my parents wanted me to go to major seminary and I said no. My mother was the one who convinced me to give it a try, telling me that if I was really unhappy, I could always leave. Once I was in seminary, though, I made very good friends who became like brothers. I did wrestle with my calling after I was ordained a transitional deacon, but I eventually found that I was at peace with being a priest. That peace has stayed with me, despite all the challenges I’ve faced.

How did you end up in Alaska?

I was ordained in 2013 and soon afterwards, my bishop sent me to two villages that had been ravaged by the terrorist group Boko Haram, because no other priest would serve there. It was hard going to see people suffering like that and I worked there for a year and a half before returning to serve my own people. A while later, my bishop called to ask if I would think about going to serve in Alaska since the Diocese of Fairbanks had so few priests. I said I didn’t have to think about it, because the answer was no. It wasn’t anything against Alaska—I wasn’t even afraid of the cold, really—but I just didn’t want to leave my people. Two weeks later, he called again and asked if I would at least go and try it, and assured me I could come home if Alaska wasn’t for me. I have taken a vow of obedience to my bishop, so I agreed to come serve. I can really see now how much the Yup’ik people need and want the Mass and sacraments, so I’m glad I can be here for them.

What advice would you give a young man who thinks he may be called to the priesthood?

I would tell him that he must love Jesus above all things, and be able to see the hand of God in every difficulty and challenge. I would encourage him to seriously consider the struggles he’ll face as a priest, too. If he’s American, he should consider that the abuse crisis will make it harder to be trusted and lead souls. The priesthood is for big-hearted men and you must be ready to bear heavy burdens to serve Our Lord in this vocation.