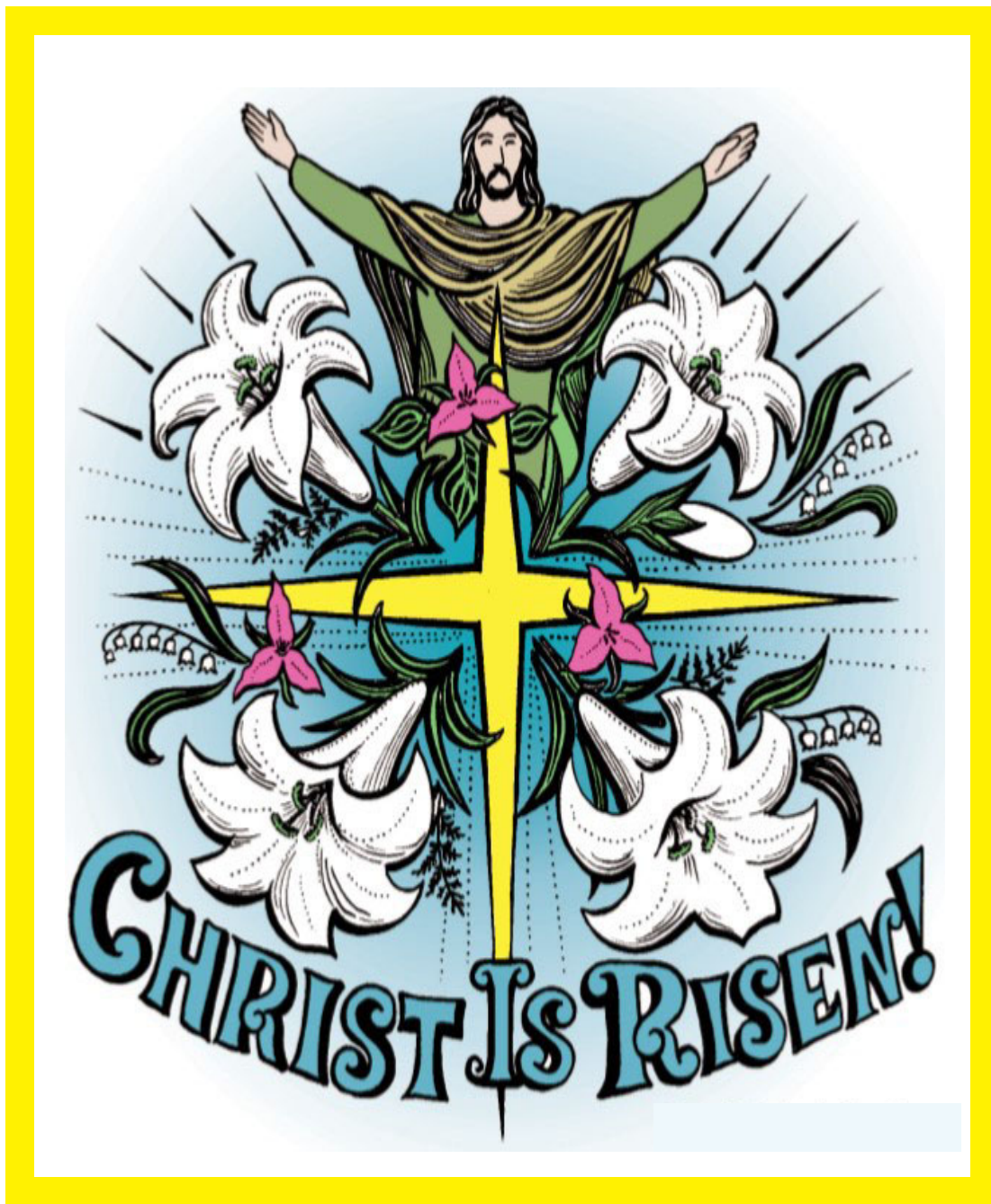




The Parishioner

“Encounter Jesus, Serve Others.”

SPECIAL EDITION - Easter 2019



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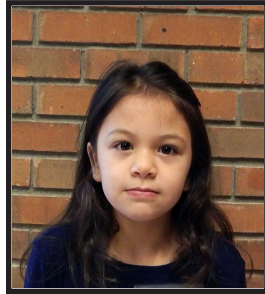
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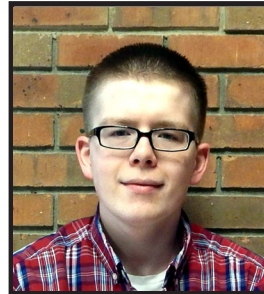
Welcome to our newest Catholics

Easter Vigil, April 21, 2019

~ Reception of the Sacrament of Initiation ~



Joey Connell



Andrew Easter



Leah Lile



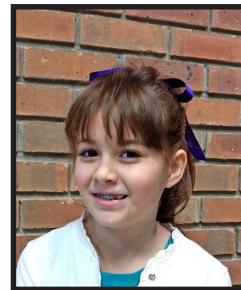
~ Profession of Faith ~



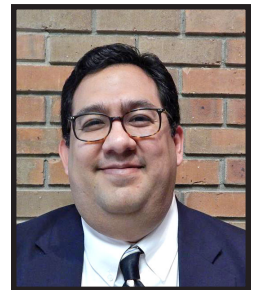
David Bush



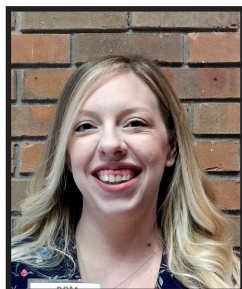
Lacie Canizares



Mia Canizares



Milton Canizares



Samantha Coker



Elizabeth Gipson



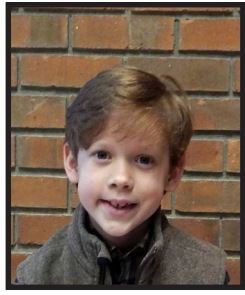
Sarah Gipson



Angela Glasgow



Kingsley Glasgow



Kingston Glasgow



Meredith Lavallais



Cynthia Oman



Alice Price



Kaleb Richins



Andy Rub



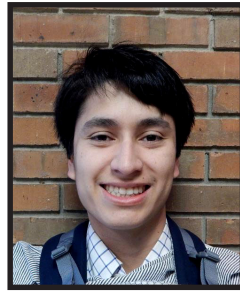
Chris Smith



Rob Trawick



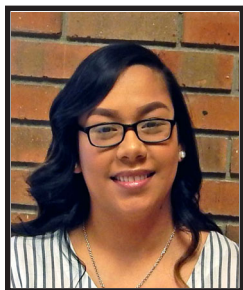
Kaitlin Ubeda



Joel Ubeda



~ Sacrament of Confirmation ~



Nicole Manglona



Leslie Trawick

Witnessing the Good News

A FAITH FORMATION INITIATIVE

by *Samantha Denefe*

Director of Evangelization and Adult Faith Formation

*“We
aren’t
saved by
what
we
know,
but
by whom
we
know.”*

*“I know well the plans
I have for you,
plans to prosper you
and not to harm you,
plans to give you a hope
and a future.”*

(Jeremiah 29:11)

God declares something so beautiful to Jeremiah. He loves us, and He wants what is good for us. This is GOOD NEWS. So good, that we can't help but share it. When the Living God, comes to encounter us, our lives can't help but be changed. In my four years of ministry here at Holy Souls I have found that somewhere along the way we missed the fact that our God is LIVING. That our God wants to encounter us, to speak directly to us, and that this is not reserved for just the canonized saints, or the clergy, or the super holy people, but for all of God's people.

When we have this life-changing encounter, it leads us into a relationship with Christ in the midst of His Church. This is something that the Catholic Church has always taught. Bishop Anthony Taylor reminded us last year during the first Sunday of Lent: “We aren't saved by what we know, but by whom we know.” To know someone, to really know someone, we must know His voice. We must be able to listen to Him. When this happens, when we are awoken by the God who yearns to share his life with us, our faith story begins to develop.

During this Easter season, we are going to share our faith stories. Faith is found by

being heard. As we hear each other's stories of faith, our hope is that it will ignite in us a yearning to know God more. Think about the Samaritan woman at the well (found in John 4). Towards the end of the story the woman runs to town to tell them of her encounter with Jesus, and the curious people come to Jesus. Is this man really all that she says he is? After time with Jesus, the town says to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." How beautiful! This is how faith often begins, we are called to share our personal experience, to introduce our friends, families, and co-workers to Jesus through our own encounters. Then they will come to know Jesus as they begin to encounter Him themselves.

During this Easter season, we as a parish are focusing on what it means to be a witness to the good news of Jesus' power in the Resurrection. This special edition of **The Parishioner** focuses solely on the faith stories of parishioners. These parishioners have encountered God in life-changing ways, matured in their faith, and feel sent by God to share the glorious news that we believe in a God who loves us!

*"In the long run,
is there any other way
of handing
on the Gospel
than by transmitting
to another person
one's personal experience
of faith?"*

– Blessed Paul VI,
Evangelii Nuntiandi, 46

*"As
we
hear
other's
story
of faith,
our
hope is
that
it will
ignite
in us
a yearning
to know
God
more."*

Wendy Floriani ~ Her Story ~

by MaryAnn Stafford, EdD

*“Conversion
is not a
one-time
event,
but an
unceasing
venture
toward
fulfilling
God’s
plan . . .”*

Our faith journey doesn’t always end when we first discover Jesus. Instead, our path takes a lifetime to fully experience a closeness to God. Understanding the impact that Jesus has in our lives — His gentle proddings, His grace that overcomes our struggles, His Divine interactions— often depend on our paying closer attention to the things that happen along the way. These can include dreams, coincidences, events, discussions, people, and other circumstances that suggest His intervention in our lives.

This was how it happened for Wendy Floriani, Director of Youth Faith Formation at Holy Souls Church. Wendy was raised in a strong Baptist family, and had spent her teen-aged years in the Spiritual Warfare and Training program (SWAT) at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church. As an adult, she attended Fellowship Bible Church. Wendy stated that “she would never become a Catholic” before her marriage to Vince Floriani when she was 29 years old. Vince, a cradle Catholic, was attending Our Lady of Holy Souls Church, but agreed to attend St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church with her as a compromise. They were married there in 2000. His mother had been Episcopalian before conversion to the Catholic faith, and they had a number of Episcopalian friends, so it made sense, they thought.

A series of tragic events led to Wendy’s conversion to the Catholic faith starting with the stillbirth of her second son Cooper in 2006. Wendy was scheduled for a C-section, but went into labor with bleeding and contractions that very morning. There was no heartbeat. Instead of mourning her loss, she worried about her son Ben’s reactions. The priest from St. Margaret’s visited her and her family in the hospital, and helped her through her pain. Needless to say, it was hard on her husband, her parents and her in-laws as well. But she was never angry at God, nor did she blame Him for her loss. Cooper’s ashes are interred in the columbarium at St. Margaret’s.

Soon after that, she got a call from the church asking her to help with Mother’s Day Out for two days a week for a few months. Sitting with toddlers gave her something to do for other mothers. She felt that God led her into this to help with her grief. She and her husband were also trying for another baby since she was 36 years old at the time.



One month later, she was pregnant. It was not an easy pregnancy, and Wendy was anxious the entire time. But God was working in her life, and Grant was born in March of 2008. While she was pregnant, she taught three-year olds at Westover Hills Presbyterian Church – a job she loved, but she became a full-time Mom after the birth.

In January 2010, her father-in-law was diagnosed with dementia. Vince’s mother lived with them while the father was undergoing analysis and treatment at UAMS for three months. Trips back and forth to the hospital, taking care of her young boys, and driving to Lake Village to help after the parents went home took a toll on her time and energy. Vince and Wendy were unable to attend church during this time, but they occasionally went to Mass with his parents during their visits to Lake Village. Both of Vince’s parents were devout Catholics.

During all this time, she kept hearing her father-in-law’s voice over and over again in the back of her head when he had said to her on her wedding day, “Don’t you tell anyone you’re not Catholic.” On a whim, she picked up the phone and called her friend, Courtney Menz, who was a parishioner at Holy Souls Church. Wendy had attended Cursillo with Courtney in 2000 while she was discerning to become Catholic. Wendy asked her who was the pastor at Holy Souls Church, and the reply was “Father Eric Pohlmeier.” Father Eric had been the priest at Lake Village when they had attended with Vince’s mother and father. Wendy felt that God was telling her “This was where I was supposed to be!”

So Wendy told Vince that it might be time to attend Mass at Holy Souls Church. He was overjoyed to go back to the Catholic Church. He had not been really happy as an Episcopalian. They began to attend RCIA in August of 2010. Vince’s father died in January of 2011, and that Easter, both Vince and Wendy joined the Catholic Church along with celebrating Ben’s First Communion.

Since then, Wendy has been very involved in parish life at Holy Souls Church. She keeps thinking about her purpose – asking God why He has pointed her in certain directions. Before taking the job as Director of Youth Faith Formation, she served as Altar Society president, president of the school board, and group leader of the girls’ Confirmation class. She is an Eucharistic Minister to the sick, and has been involved in small groups, Bible study, Walking with Purpose and lately the Called and Gifted Workshop where she learned that her chief charism was Service.

As Director of Youth Faith Formation, she is responsible for coordinating Confirmation, First Communion and Reconciliation, helps with the school curriculum and “other duties as prescribed.” She feels that God is constantly calling her to more missions, especially with small children. Her oldest son Ben is sixteen, and her youngest son Grant is in the current Confirmation class.

Her prayer life includes scripture readings and constantly conversing with God throughout the day as per St. Paul’s injunction to “Pray constantly.” She listens and understands that conversion is not a one-time event, but an unceasing venture toward fulfilling God’s plan for her.

*“God
was
telling
her
‘This
was
where
I
was
supposed
to
be!’”*

Greg and Rosemarie Peckham ~ Their Story ~

by MaryAnn Stafford, EdD

“Three things led to Greg’s awakening: Music, Community, and their trip to Lourdes in 2014 . . .”

Greg and Rosemarie Peckham are cradle Catholics. Both are from deeply religious and large families – Greg has five brothers and two sisters; Rosemarie has five sisters and two brothers. Originally from Wisconsin, Greg met Rosemarie when they both were enrolled in the music department at Notre Dame University. Rosemarie has always been an Arkansan; a Holy Souls parishioner from birth.



Greg is an architect and has his own firm with a partner: Peckham/Smith Architecture. He founded this company in 1996 and deals mainly with commercial, medical, and church properties. Rosemarie retired from Entergy as Manager of Environmental Service five years ago; the following year, her father got sick and passed away. Since then, she spends much time gardening. Both of them travel extensively and have a lake house at Greers Ferry, where they spend a lot of time. They have been married for 40 years and have three children and three grandchildren.

Both possess an ingrained love of music, especially sacred choral music. The cause of their initial attraction to each other, music is still supremely important in their marriage. Both of them are musicians involved in choral music – Rose as a soprano and Greg as a tenor. They previously sang in the Holy Souls choir, but now sing in an octet at the Cathedral for Saturday evening masses. Greg even composed a mass for Holy Souls years ago, but he has not revised it in the new form as yet. One of their sons is also a choral singer, singing for the Cathedral as well.

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Despite being raised Catholic and attending Catholic schools and university, neither one has always been the deeply spiritual Catholics they are now. It has been a gradual process for both of them but especially for Greg. He stated that he had “always checked off the boxes” attending Mass and the sacraments as he was supposed to, but not feeling a deep faith. He relates three things that led to his awakening: music, community, and their trip to Lourdes in 2014.

Music, especially sacred choral music, has always brought them both closer to God. Beautiful sacred music always moved Greg emotionally. He plays piano by ear, and a few instruments, but singing is his special way to pray. Because of this passion, Greg and Rosemarie became acquainted with several other parishioners who sang and prayed

together in a group. These get-togethers led to more community involvement with certain priests, with the Carmelites, and in spiritual retreats. They both attended Cursillo in the mid 1990's. The major awakening came with a trip (The Pilgrim Way) in 2014 with a group including Rosemarie's sister and her husband. At first, Greg was not that interested in the trip except for the fact that Rome was included in the itinerary. While studying architecture, Greg had lived in Rome for a while and loved the place. He had also visited Assisi while in Italy.

The Pilgrim Way was a walking pilgrimage to Southern France, Northern Spain, Portugal, and Italy that lasted two weeks. They visited Fatima, the church of St. James the Apostle and Santiago de Compostelo in Spain, and Rome, of course. Visits to these spiritual places were interesting, but Greg's wake-up call was the visit to Lourdes. For Greg it was a turning point in his faith journey; he had a phenomenal experience. "There is no longer any doubt at all," he said.

When asked to elaborate on his experience, Greg said that there is really no way to describe it. He sat across the river and saw thousands of people, with their incredible faith – all focused on the same thing: the grotto where St. Bernadette saw the Blessed Virgin Mary. The basilica is built atop the grotto, but the actual grotto is still intact. He described seeing the people cross the river to the grotto which contains a statue of the virgin built according to Bernadette's description, and he was struck with conversion is not a one-time event, but an unceasing venture toward fulfilling God's plan for her. The pilgrims were there for two days and nights, with a procession and rosary each night. Even now, he experiences the same emotions when he recalls the event.

Returning home, he had a few months wondering what God wanted him to do with his life. During this time, Rose's Dad got sick and died. Then Father Eric got in touch with them both and invited them as leaders in a small group program the church was beginning. So in 2015, they received training from the Evangelical Catholic group and started their small group which continues to this day. Greg and Rose have seen the small group members grow in their prayer life because of their meetings.

In December of last year, Rose had a serious fall when she tripped over some leftover wiring from a Christmas display and broke both ankles. She prayed constantly through the pain and the physical therapy which followed. Not only did the accident bring her closer to God but their family pulled together more because of her injury.

When asked what gifts God has given them to assist in this ministry, Greg suggests his attraction to sacred music, the gift of hospitality, the ease of performance as a cantor and a leader, and his organizational skills. Rose complements Greg's gifts by being more extroverted and perceptive. They complete each other when facilitating the small group meetings.

Greg feels that his faith journey was so gradual that it took forty years of his marriage and the visit to Lourdes to realize the love of God and grow in relationship to Christ. Rosemarie and Greg are scheduled to visit the Holy Land in October next year.

*"An
accident
brought
Rose
closer to
God"*

Jim & Ruthmary Goodhart

~ Their Faith Journey ~

by MaryAnn Stafford, EdD

*“A
Marriage
Made
In
Heaven”*

“A marriage made in heaven” – trite, but true in the case of Jim and Ruthmary Goodhart. From the moment they met, they have provided support and inspiration to each other in their faith journey and service to the church. This is especially true now that Jim is in his second year of the Diaconate Formation Program. They have been married 35 years with four children and three grandchildren.



Both Jim and Ruthmary are cradle Catholics growing up in an atmosphere of prayer, worship, and service. From a family that included five sisters and two brothers, Jim was always committed to his Catholicism. But the death of his sister from a car wreck when she was seventeen years old caused him to seek God’s comfort even more. He was ten years old at the time. Jim attended Our Lady of Good Counsel and its school as a child. After attending Catholic High School in Little Rock, he graduated from Vanderbilt as an environmental engineer. Even while attending college, he was active with the Dominican order on campus, attending retreats as well as leading them. His mother was a legal secretary, and he was always interested in the field of law. After a while he took a job in New Orleans, and that’s where he met his future wife.

Ruthmary grew up in New Orleans with a strong religious upbringing. She had attended St. Regis Church and school and was about to graduate from LSU with a nursing degree. They originally met at a bar and were to have a date the next Saturday evening, but Jim said he had to go to Mass first. He wanted to attend St Regis Church; Ruthmary said that was fine with her and she’d go with him, never mentioning that she was a parishioner at that same church. From then on, it was inevitable that they would become man and wife; God had led them to each other.

Ruthmary graduated in May 1983 and they married the next month. Always interested in a law career, Jim had originally tried to attend Loyola at night and keep his day job, but it became too much for him, and he quit. He asked Ruthmary about his going back to school to get a law degree, and she agreed. He started law school full time that August. So Ruthmary supported him with her nursing career while he attended three years of law school, and an additional year at Tulane to earn a Master’s degree. They

lived in New Orleans for ten years — studying, working, and raising a family of four children as well.

Moving from New Orleans to Little Rock, they became active at Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church. Ruthmary took a job as a nurse at St. Vincent’s Hospital and still works there, while Jim continues to work in environmental law. He is active as a lector, Eucharistic minister for the sick, and as a member of the Knights of Columbus. She volunteers in the Altar Society and the Funeral Ministry. Jim and Ruthmary are a Sponsor Couples in Holy Souls’ Marriage Preparation Program. They both attend one of the small groups. With their involvement in the Diaconate Program, they were cautioned to draw back from excess activity because of the time and commitment required.

Ruthmary and Jim believe that they were meant for each other. Ruthmary said: “God was always first: from our first date, when we attended Mass together, raising our children, managing the household, and now nurturing our grandchildren.” Always a person of prayer, she sees her faith journey as a gradual growth through her marriage and her mission as the caregiver of the family. She and Jim are a team, and she regularly goes to training with Jim at the diaconate meetings.

They complement each other in several different ways. Ruthmary sees herself as a caregiver – a type more like Martha than Mary. She is organized, reliable, and a worker “behind the scenes.” As a nurse, she is able to program her hours to coincide with family needs and support. Jim is more outgoing, a problem solver, thinker, and administrator with the ability to lead and facilitate groups.

When asked at what moments she has greatly felt the presence of God, Ruthmary mentioned her work in a Catholic hospital. She related a time when she prayed hard for a sick child. She asked the Blessed Mother to help the child who was in pain suffering after surgery. “My prayer to her took energy, everything I had. She gave my child peace and sleep. She was there. I felt her there.”

Jim feels God’s presence especially at Eucharistic adoration, during Holy Communion, and the gathering of the faithful at Holy Souls Church. He added, “Also, when I take walks with our dogs or when I’m alone at home in prayer or study.” Their prayer life consists of the Liturgy of the Hours and private prayer, but Jim is especially devoted to reading Scripture and Lectio Divina. When he felt the call from God to join the Diaconate Program, he talked about it to Ruthmary, and they both prayed over the decision for a time. She helped him make the decision, as she has always been his support and advocate. As a team, they illustrate the fact that every person was made by God for a certain purpose; the task is to discern that purpose and follow through.

*Ruthmary’s
faith
journey
was
a gradual
growth
through
her marriage
and
her
mission
as the
caregiver
of the family.*

Monica Iller ~ Her Story ~

by MaryAnn Stafford, EdD

*Monica
has a
“magnetic
way
to lead
others
to God.”*

Raised by devout Polish-American parents, Monica Iller always had a strong faith in God and in the Catholic religion. She grew up in Texas, and attended Catholic schools and a Catholic university. As a teenager, she was active in CCD and served as a lector at Mass, as well as participating in debate and public



speaking while in high school. She stated that she has always been a conscientious Catholic especially now as a mother and wife.

But her childlike faith is now being changed into a more mature relationship with Jesus. While in college and involved with many friends, she let her commitment waver a bit. Going to Mass was not a high priority, and she felt that life wasn't very satisfying. After college, she became more faithful. In 2013, she married Bryant, a pilot in the military reserves who has been deployed five times and is again deployed. He served as a pilot for Delta Airlines stationed in Atlanta, so she is sometimes even then left alone to manage her life and an eleven-month old daughter named Elizabeth Kathryn Jarrell. She met her future husband while working as general manager in her parents' west Texas hotels. Monica also worked in tourism for a time before marriage.

As a stay-at-home mom, Monica still finds time to volunteer, currently being involved in the Altar Society, Junior League of Little Rock and Bible Study groups. In addition,

she has been especially active in evangelization leading several friends to attend church. Her mother told her that she had a “magnetic way to lead others to God.” In particular, she recalls helping a married couple (one who was Baptist and the other Catholic) become Catholic. It has never been a problem asking others to attend Mass with her.

Monica has also inspired her husband to attend church as a family when he was able to be at home. Bryant was raised Presbyterian and is considering attending RCIA in the future. Being very analytical, he asked questions which caused her to freshen up on her religious beliefs as well.

When asked what she thinks has strengthened her relationship to Jesus, she said, “I think the eighteen year old version of me versus the twenty-one year old version of me and where I am today are all three separate people with varying priorities. So I would say that age and maturity have been the biggest factors.” She always had a tendency to overcommit, but now she is now able to say “no” when necessary. Her marriage and move to Little Rock led her to make new friends at church and get more involved. This in turn, helped her grow and in her faith and prayer life.

Praying has become more intentional and frequent, and she is teaching her small child to pray the little prayers such as, “Angel of God...” She is starting a prayer journal, and has been attending Bible Study, which has greatly enhanced her prayer life. Matthew 14:22 is her favorite scripture reading; the story of Jesus walking on the water reminds her that “even when life is stormy and chaotic, to have faith and hold on to Jesus’ hand.”

Monica is considering starting a prayer group for new parents complete with suggestions and practical helps for parenting. Her only question to God is whether or not she could have made a better impact in the world by not saying or doing something. However, it seems that Monica Iller is well on her way to making the impact she intends.

*“When
life is
stormy,
have
faith
and
hold
on to
Jesus’
hand.”*

Matthew 14:22

Tom Kirchner

~ His Faith Journey ~

by MaryAnn Stafford, EdD

*“He
heard
the
voice of
God
directing
him
toward
a ministry
of
spiritual
writing.”*

As a candidate for the diaconate with two years into the training program, Tom Kirchner is an example of energy and accomplishment for the Catholic faith. Born and raised in Little Rock, he was baptized at Our Lady of Holy Souls, and has always been a parishioner except for the short times he lived elsewhere. The large Kirchner family claims over three hundred descendants, and Tom says that he has sixty-five first cousins. For a reunion



of the Kirchner family in 2016, Tom put together a ninety-five page booklet of history for the over fifty families represented. Divorced after twenty-four years of marriage and never remarried, Kirchner has two married daughters and five grandchildren (four grandsons and one granddaughter) with whom he is very close.

With a Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science and an MBA from UALR in Business Administration, Tom has worked in many different positions at Verizon, AP&L, Entergy, and AllTel – even having his own consulting firm and traveling to various locations across the country and overseas. He retired in 2014 when he realized he had enough savings to finance his later years. It was in 2008 however, after the death of his mother, when Tom said God started “screaming” at him to do something more with his life. Kirchner started hearing the voice of God, listening to it, visualizing, and feeling His presence. He was being directed toward a ministry of spiritual writing.

Before this, Tom had been very active in the parish with a term on the Parish Council, RCIA sponsorship, three years in the Feed the Hungry program, and co-authoring of a three-act play tracing the Eucharist devotion from the Last Supper to present time. This play, written during the Year of the Eucharist, was acted out on three different nights in the Allen Center in 2003. DVD’s of the play are still available. Because of the influence of Deacon Tim Massanelli, he began inquiring about the diaconate program just beginning, but did not feel ready for this step as yet. Instead, he attended the Theology Institute.

With the realization that God was expecting more of him after his retirement, he signed up to foster teen-aged boys in his home. At one time, he fostered three teenagers—17, 16, and 15 years old. Problems with run-aways and his inability to spend time with his grandchildren convinced him to give up on this mission, and he became a “prayer warrior” instead for the foster-care program.

Then in 2015 (The Year of Mercy), Tom began making holy cards for different feast days and/or scripture readings and giving them away to others. He used the photos of sacred sites he had taken from other countries as well as his own artwork on the fronts, and wrote his own prayers on the back. His purpose was to get people to pray more. So far, he has done close to 700 of the prayer cards in different series. He is now working on a series depicting the churches in the Little Rock Diocese.

The urge to do more spiritual writing developed, and soon he was writing books about praying the rosary. This series is called “A Scriptural Approach to the Rosary” and resulted after he was asked to conduct rosary services during Lent. The writing required much research “on the rosary, its history, its prayers, scripture references and reflections.” By listening to God, he also felt that he had to write about more than the mysteries of the rosary. He has since written four more books: The Healing Acts of God; The Guiding Acts of God; The Merciful Acts of God; and The Missionary Acts of God. The next book will be about the Covenant Acts of God. All the books are available on the web at <http://thebp.site> or from his web site: www.LittleRockPrayerCards.com. He continues to conduct rosary services every First Saturday before Mass at Holy Souls Church.

When the diaconate training program started up again, Tom was determined to be part of it. He is particularly hampered however, by not being married. He is one of three men who lack the support and “sounding boards” of having a wife. These are the first single men ever to be ordained in the Diocese of Little Rock. They must take a vow of celibacy just as a priest would. Since the program seems to be structured for couples (even the correspondence and the monthly sessions are geared toward married men), Tom says that this situation takes more prayer and reflection on his part, and he has to reach out to some of his friends for help. But he is not discouraged. Being retired gives him the time to work through these problems.

As a deacon, Tom feels that his mission will be serving as a bridge connecting parishioners to the church by presenting their petitions and helping at the Consecration of the Mass. He will continue to overcome his fears and trust God to show him what’s next, even though he is amazed that he has become creative in spite of being a scientist! It is the spirit working within us that guides our path to holiness even though we may not understand this path at all. Tom Kirchner has whole-heartedly accepted his path.

*“It is
the Spirit
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Hank & Kari Belding

~ Their Faith Journey ~

by MaryAnn Stafford, EdD

*“As
Hank’s
faith
grew,
his
passion
to help
others
grew
as well.”*

Hank and Kari Belding became practicing Catholics and parishioners of Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church in February this year when Hank and their two-year old son Gilbert were baptized. This was not an easy process; it took months of training, prayer, introspection, and nullification of Kari’s previous marriage and convalidation of their own marriage of five years. Since both are now 33 years of age, they consider themselves “millennials.”



Hank was born in Ft. Worth, but he and his family moved to Canada and then to a suburb of Buffalo, New York, where he

attended school. He had no religious upbringing at all; he states that growing up in that area was an entirely different situation than growing up in the Bible Belt of the South. He attended his friend’s churches occasionally, but it had no effect on him. His mother, being Danish, seemed to have a negative attitude toward any church, and his Canadian father had a similar view.

The situation was a little different with Kari, who was born in Niagara Falls. Her family were Lutheran, but she was baptized Catholic because of her friends’ influence. However, her mother was not really a religious person; dropping her off at church for mass, but not attending herself. So Kari went through First Reconciliation and Communion, but wasn’t confirmed. She sought out different spiritualities, even trying Wicca and the Universalist religions for a time, but found these empty. She wanted something more.

The two attended the same school on Grand Island close to the Canadian border in New York, and became sweethearts in middle school. They lost touch with each other after that, even though they attended the same high school and college. Kari married another and divorced a few years later with no children. It was then that Hank and Kari resumed their relationship, and were subsequently married.

She was a music teacher at that time, but when the recession hit, her job disappeared. Hank was a social worker, and they decided to look elsewhere for employment. They applied all over the country, and found what they wanted in Arkansas. Kari took a

teaching job in Junction City, Arkansas, and Hank took a job as a drug counselor in nearby El Dorado.

The couple began looking for a meaningful church experience. They started attending a Methodist church on Sunday morning. It was a contemporary service with a lot of jazz music and little scripture and didn't satisfy their hunger for spirituality. About that time, Kari miscarried their first pregnancy and they decided to go to Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in El Dorado. It was the first time Hank had ever visited a Catholic Church, and the experience overwhelmed him. In fact, it scared him. He felt that "Men are not supposed to get emotional. It was beautiful. Sitting there and looking at the crucifix, I was overtaken by emotion and lost myself for a period of time." It was his experience of the Holy Spirit and he had to take time to mull over it. It was in their second year of marriage.

Not long after that, Kari became pregnant with Gilbert, and they moved to Little Rock. The birth of their baby deepened Kari's relationship with God. "Holding a precious baby in your arms, who is totally dependent on you, is like your own dependence to God and His love for you," she said. The final push toward their conversion was watching the HBO show, "The Leftovers." It was a rapture story, but it was mostly about grappling with what you don't understand, and having to take the path of faith instead of struggling with questions.

They started RCIA in 2017, and it took until 2019 to fully become Catholic. They have been active in the parish as well as using their gifts from God to help others in their chosen careers. Hank works with Social Security Administration disability claims, so he is in a position to help those who most need his help. As his faith grew, his passion to help others grew as well. He says that he is now rid of the cold, existential anger he once experienced. No longer mad at the universe, he takes responsibility for his own actions. He is accepting of the differences of others, and he even sees felons and addicts as people who deserve his help. He and Kari sing in the parish choir, and Kari is active in Walking with Purpose and Bible Study groups.

Her special gift is teaching. Certified in both music and voice, she is the music teacher at the Arkansas School for the Deaf; in fact, she is the first music teacher there. As she talks about her work teaching music to the deaf, she becomes very animated using sign language. She describes her function as giving kids what they haven't heard before, and she's learning from them. While there are three ways to hear music (visual, audio, and movement), her philosophy centers on the visual and the kinesthetic in order to teach even the totally deaf. The practice includes marching, visual reading at the computer, and rhythm. She finds her job very rewarding and fun.

Their common prayer is one of gratitude—for others, for grace, and for love. They have set times for prayer, focusing on what happened that day, what they did or did not do, and they teach their young son his bedtime prayers. Hank has a profound belief in purgatory and now prays for his dead relatives, especially for a recent sudden death. Death is not the end, and he is thankful that he has a chance to help those who went before him. Kari and Hank intend to have more children, and to become even more active in their church community.

*"The
birth of
their
baby
deepened
Kari's
relationship
with
God"*

Stacey Matchett

~ Her Witness Story ~

by MaryAnn Stafford, EdD

“The first time she received Communion, she felt God’s love wash over her.”

Raised in the Baptist religion, Holy Soul’s Church Secretary Stacey Matchett always had faith in Jesus Christ. She grew up in a family where her mother had an intense relationship with God, and they all attended church at least three times per week. Her mother chaperoned soft ball teams and girl’s activities and her sister was involved with the youth group. Unfortunately, her mother and father divorced when Stacey was a senior in high school. After that, Stacey lost interest in attending church, married at the age of 26, and had a daughter.



Her husband David had also been raised Baptist, and a few years later, they both decided one morning to start going back to church services. After moving a few times in the Little Rock area, they moved to North Little Rock and joined Park Hill Baptist Church, but didn’t really have a feeling of community because it was so large. Twelve years later, they were divorced.

Stacey’s ex-husband had requested that their daughter Summer would attend Mt. St. Mary’s when old enough, so Stacey enrolled her at Holy Souls School as preparation. This was actually the catalyst for Stacey’s conversion to the Catholic religion. Because of the interest Summer began to display in the Catholic religion and her increased faith, Stacey became curious about the Catholic faith and started asking questions. Summer’s teacher encouraged her and invited her to attend RCIA, offering to sponsor her. But this would take some time.

The conversion process was slow and gradual – involving several years of questioning, growing, and overcoming feelings of unworthiness. Stacey remarried eight years ago, and her husband Jim became a Christian two years later. They decided to attend Mass at Holy Souls because of Summer’s enthusiasm, and the first time they attended, Jim had a profound experience. They both decided to become Catholics.

She and her husband Jim completed RCIA two years ago, but circumstances kept them from joining the church: both their fathers died, Jim lost his sister in a house fire, a slow process of nullification of previous marriages, an emergency appendectomy, and other traumatic events. They became Catholics on August 26, 2018. The first time she received communion, Stacey said she felt God’s love wash over her. She recalled when she first brought her new-born daughter Summer home from the hospital. The baby had been born with complications, and it was the first time Stacey could hold her. She was full of love for this child. Stacey now realizes that as much as she loves her children, God loves her even more! His love is overwhelming, and just by opening her

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Kay Kay DeRossette

~ Her Faith Journey ~

by MaryAnn Stafford, EdD

Her name is Katharine DeRossette, but she goes by the nickname of “Kay Kay.” Her older sister called her that through grade school and high school, and it stuck. Originally from Vicksburg, Mississippi, Kay Kay works for the Central Arkansas Library System as the “Be Mighty” Coordinator. This program connects teens and younger children with healthy meals at several meal sites around the city. As a member of the National League of Cities, Little Rock is one of six cities in the program which is funded by grants from the USDA through the Department of Human Services. “Be Mighty” furnishes up to 5,000 meals per week and around 300,000 meals in the summer months. Kay Kay hopes to increase this number to 500,000 this summer.



Recycling and environmental control has always been Kay Kay’s chief interest, even though she served as Youth Faith Formation Director at Our Lady of Holy Souls Church before taking the job at CALS. Her formal education has been in Environmental Sustainability with a degree from Ole Miss. As an undergraduate, she interned in their recycling program for three years which included going to tailgaters on Game Days and talking about saving the environment. In 2014, she earned a Master’s degree from the University of Arkansas in Higher Education and Sustainability.

Both parents are Catholic, and her older sister was recently married in the Greek Orthodox Church. Her younger sister is still in high school where her mother serves in an administrative role. Kay Kay relates that her immediate family always attended Mass and devotions but her extended family was not as regular. At one time, she had an agnostic roommate in college, and they attended some non-denominational Bible groups such as Campus Crusades, but a focus on predestination turned her off.

A recent situation in her immediate family has caused a division, so she doesn’t get to go home to Vicksburg as often as she once did. Her boyfriend is in the Air Force, and has recently been deployed to Afghanistan, so she is facing some lonely times in Arkansas. However, the warmth she receives from Our Lady of Holy Souls Church has softened these times. Kay Kay is at the beginning of her faith journey and is still searching for what God wants of her. She desires to learn more and more about spirituality and is active in several prayer programs. These include: “Teach Me To Pray” - a twelve week prayer series she started at St. Thomas Catholic Church when she attended UAF, and “Retreat in Daily Life” - a 32 week series with monthly sessions at St. Joseph Church in Conway and Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Marche. “Teach Me to Pray” is an Ignation approach to prayer; she has taken this program four times now.

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“It takes a lifetime to discover all the beauty of a close relationship with Jesus.”

Brent Wetzler & Nikki Battisto

~ Their Story ~

by MaryAnn Stafford, EdD

*“God
saved
her
life!”*

Sometimes it takes a serious illness to bring one closer to God. Faced with the prospect of death and/or debilitating weakness, a person realizes his dependence on the Creator and the Savior. This is what happened to Brent Wetzler and his wife Nikki.

They married in 2004 and have two grown children (Nikki’s by previous marriages) and three grandchildren. Born in Hot Springs, but spending his early years in Oklahoma, Brent was raised Presbyterian and was very active in his church due to the influence of his pastor, Dr. Adrian Kolean. Brent sang in the youth choir, did the readings at church services, and had an interest in public speaking. At the age of seventeen, he and his family moved back to Arkansas and began attending a much larger Presbyterian church. Brent no longer felt as connected to this larger church, but stated that he never lost his connection with God. It was easy to fall out of the habit of attending church while in college and later, working in the restaurant business.



Nikki and Brent met while he was working for her brothers in the Dixie Café in Conway. Having a mutual attraction, including both being bowlers and Arkansas Razorback fans, they married in 2004. Nikki had been raised Catholic – a Holy Souls Parishioner, but had stopped regularly attending Mass.

All this changed when Brent had a serious illness ten years later. He almost died from Chron’s disease, but surgical removal of most of his large intestines healed him. As a result, both Nikki and Brent started talking about going back to church, so they began attending Our Lady of the Holy Souls Catholic Church in 2014. Brent was asking questions and looking for answers, so they both joined the RCIA program in August of 2015.

This was only the start of their journey back to a closer relationship with Jesus. It took one more serious illness. On December 11 of that same year, Nikki Wetzler almost died from an aneurism attack. She doesn’t remember much about the episode except for the massive headache and extreme nausea that caused her husband Brent to drive her to the emergency room at Baptist Hospital. They were getting ready to go to work when she complained about the headache – an unusual symptom for Nikki. As they wheeled Nikki in for a CT scan, Brent called her brother who called her other siblings. Five of them showed up at the hospital as well as her boss, who was also Brent’s sponsor for RCIA.

The CT scan found two aneurisms, one of which was leaking into her brain. Providentially, the top neurosurgeon in Arkansas had just finished with a call at the hospital and was leaving when he was stopped for Nikki's emergency surgery. The surgery included the insertion of two platinum wires through the groin into her brain which are still in place.

She thoroughly believes that God saved her life. If only one thing had gone wrong: problems getting to the hospital on time, the lack of a surgeon on duty, if she or Brent had been at work instead of at home, she would have died. Statistics have shown that only 3% of patients survive, and most of these are left with disabilities. Nikki's only result was the loss of taste.

Neither Brent nor Nikki had ever lost faith in God, but they had lost their ability to talk to God, and to listen to Him. Having completed RCIA in 2016, both are now Catholic and active in ministry at Holy Souls Church. Their prayer life is rich and varied, attending Mass, praying constantly, and engaging in Catholic ministries online. They see their mission as helping to bring others into the church. As president of the Men's Club, Brent oversees scholarship programs, building projects for the church and parishioners, furnishing teacher supplies, donations for special funds, the funeral ministry, assistance to the Knights of Columbus, and other activities. Nikki also claims some sort of membership in the Men's Club, since she actively helps with most of its events.

Brent is Operation Supervisor at the Social Security Administration, and Nikki works for Alliance Health Care which is a joint venture with Baptist Hospital. Both are grateful for the healing power and grace of God.

“They see their mission as helping to bring others into the church!”

Stacey Matchett

(Continued from page 18)

heart to this love has added a depth of faith she had not felt before. In addition, she feels God's love during the quiet times; the times she spends with her kids; the times she spends outdoors in the beauty of nature.

Becoming Church secretary was another “God Experience” for Stacey. At the time, she was working at Verizon and helping out at the school. One day, the principal approached her about applying for the secretary position. She declined because of her current job, but when she was laid off, she thought about applying. Unfortunately, the position had already been filled. This was at the time her Dad was in Hospice and she was caring for him. She heard that the job was open again, so she sent in her resume, was interviewed, and was accepted! When asked how she likes her job as church secretary, Stacey replied, “I absolutely love it! I can't imagine a better environment than the church office.”

Stacey and Jim have two children: Lila and Luke, who are attending Holy Souls School. Summer, her oldest daughter, is seventeen.

Ted & Wendy Saer ~ Their Story ~

by MaryAnn Stafford, EdD

*“Working
in
the same
vineyard,
but
in a
different
area.”*

A doctor of orthopedic medicine, Ted Saer III is in the diaconate program with others from Our Lady of the Holy Souls Parish. He was born and raised as a Catholic in New Orleans, moving to Little Rock with his wife and children in 1981 to be near his grandmother and cousins. He stated that his parents were not “hard core” Catholics, but that his grandmother was his greatest influence on his spirituality. He attended a private high school with a lot of other Catholic students, but



began questioning his religion in college, as most do. His grandmother kept him straight. He spent several summers with her, and she talked to him often about his beliefs. She had 24 grandchildren, and died in 2002 at the age of 106.

He dated his future wife Wendy during high school, and they married after he completed his training. Marriage brought him back to attendance at church, since his new wife was from a strong and large Catholic family. Wendy and her family never missed Mass, said the rosary, and prayed together at meal times, often with a priest present for Sunday dinner. She attended Catholic grammar school, Catholic high school, and a Catholic college. They have six children and twelve grandchildren.

What led him to become semi-retired and a candidate as a deacon? His was a gradual calling – taking several years. It began with a restlessness in his 40’s that caused him to feel that God was asking him to do something special—a feeling he tried to ignore for several years. In 1997, he attended a Jesuit retreat at Holy Souls and it was a “tremendous experience.” He continued to attend these retreats and in 2012 completed the Theology Institute. For the next few years, he struggled with the idea about becoming a deacon, but didn’t quite see himself in that role. However, he felt himself becoming more tired physically with surgery, and thought it was time to change. He had to give one year’s notice in order to retire from surgery. This time coincided with the beginning of the discernment period for the diaconate. He cut back his hours, withdrew from surgical applications, and signed up for the program.

Ted sees the diaconate program as similar to his preparation as a medical doctor. Training and formation in both areas have a like goal – helping others either physically or spiritually. Both programs take around six years to shape the participant, and training

is ongoing. The long process changes a person; his spiritual director calls it working in the same vineyard but in a different area. Not sure of how he will use his training as a deacon, he is assured that God will tell him the way. He will continue his journey, no matter where it leads him.

Ignation prayer and Lectio Divina are two important features of Saer's prayer life. His favorite Bible story is from John about the woman accused of adultery. Jesus knew the reason the Pharisees brought the situation, and He calmed down an inflammatory situation and turned it around. This was the Jesus way; using compassion and intelligence to bring about a deeper learning.

Wendy Saer attends the diaconate meetings with Ted, but doesn't help him with his homework. She gave up a career as a dental hygienist for several reasons, not the least of which was raising a large family and supporting her husband in his chosen field. She is also active in volunteer organizations with the ability to control her time while teaching her children the importance of giving time to others.

Wendy's own relationship with Jesus has grown over the years. When asked about her role in the diaconate program, she said, "We are all on a journey to become who we are meant to be. The closer you get to Jesus, the closer you come to doing what God wants you to do. Ted's decision to become a deacon was like that. It did not happen overnight. As his relationship with Jesus changed, it became easier to hear the call to do more. We discussed it for years before the time was right. Ted and I have always supported each other in whatever we felt called to do. When you love someone, you want them to be the best that they can be - whatever that might be."

*"The closer
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the closer
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what God
wants you
to do."*

Kay Kay DeRossette

(Continued from page 19)

These studies have deepened her faith and made her more open to the needs of others. In 2018, she attended a silent retreat at St. Scholastica in Ft. Smith, and has attended others at St. John's with different spiritual directors. Each time has made her feel closer to Jesus –as if she is walking with Him and is being pulled along by Him. From Psalm 23, she quotes her favorite phrase, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

It takes a lifetime to discover all the beauty of a close relationship with Jesus. Kay Kay is only twenty-six years old, but she has already put her trust in the Lord. She wants to help older people as well as young, and sees her mission as continuing to work for non-profit groups. Her job is only funded through December, but she is not concerned. She knows that God is directing her path, and she follows.

Witnessing the Good News

A FAITH FORMATION INITIATIVE

In Easter we celebrate the joy of the Resurrection. Let's use this joy to also reflect in our own lives how Jesus and the joy of the Resurrection have transformed us!

This Easter season we as a parish are going to focus on what it means to be a witness to the good news of Jesus' power in the Resurrection. At different Masses, we will have individuals from our community share how Jesus has changed their lives. When we share our stories, we let Jesus shine through us. These personal witnesses encourage us in our own journeys towards Jesus in His Church.

Our hope is that during this time, you will also reflect upon your own story. Take some prayer time to think about:

- Teachings or homilies to enlighten your heart and mind to the Truth of God
- Relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ to spur you into knowing Jesus more intimately
- How your commitment and discipline with personal prayer time for God has given you a new sense of who He is, and who you are to Him
- Pivotal circumstances in your life – rather good or bad – that brought you to your knees and helped you realize your dependence and/or gratitude for God
- Has Jesus made your life better or happier?
- Has there been a moment where I intentionally decided to give my life to Jesus?
- Is there a specific way Jesus has changed me (or is changing me)?
 - Maybe through an encounter with Jesus – perhaps through a particular person, a bible verse, a discussion, a prayer, or other related experience?
- Do I now experience more freedom or joy because Jesus has changed my life?
- Have you encountered Jesus through service to others?

“In the long run, is there any other way of handing on the Gospel than by transmitting to another person one's personal experience of faith?” – Blessed Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 46

If you feel called to share your story (either with the Church during a Sunday Mass, or through our social media) we'd love to connect with you. Please reach out to Samantha Denefe in the Church office. If you don't know if you have a personal relationship with Jesus, don't feel like God has ever spoken to you, or you would like to know more about what a personal relationship with Jesus looks like, please call the Church Office and speak with Fr. John Marconi or Samantha Denefe.

