



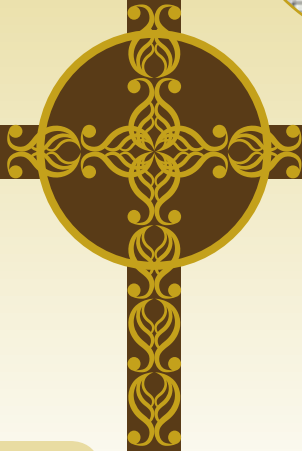
St. Alexius



Our Lady of the Angels



St. Paul's



“This Job Is Like a Calling”

Connie Blank-Meier

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Being the secretary at Our Lady of the Angels entails accounting, record-keeping and answering the phones. For Connie Blank-Meier, it also means listening to and praying with the members of the faith community, which is what she loves most about her work.

“My greatest joy in this job is greeting the people who come into the office, for when I feel a little bit unplugged, God sends someone,” Connie says. “This job is like a calling. It is my stewardship.”

Connie first moved to Sauk Centre as a child with her parents and nine siblings. She has been a lifelong member of St. Paul's and attended St. Paul's School, now Holy Family School, from kindergarten through eighth grade.

“I remember the Latin Mass and the Communion rail,” Connie says. “As children, we were in the children's choir at St. Paul's. My brothers were altar servers, and we always went to Holy Mass together on Sunday.”

When Connie began serving as the parish secretary in 2003, she became increasingly aware of the need for each faith community member to become engaged in the parish.

“I realized the need for stewardship,” Connie says. “At that time, parish



Connie Blank-Meier (back row, third from left) surrounded by her children and grandchildren at her son's wedding

members were beginning to understand how we need to step up and take ownership for our church.”

Connie discovered how many different types of giving opportunities exist through the parish. Though there are many public ways to give, there are also quiet ways, such as joining the Prayer Chain or helping clean the church. She would encourage people to talk to someone involved in a ministry in which one might be interested.

“Pray about it,” Connie says. “I didn't even think I would be worthy of being an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, but I love doing it, and I feel

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The Eucharist and Stewardship as a Way of Life

More than 20 years ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a pastoral letter titled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. This document was an invitation to follow Christ Who gave of Himself for us. Each of us is called to serve our neighbors and to be stewards of God's creation and of all that has been entrusted to us. However, to truly understand stewardship, we must look to the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is the total gift of our loving Savior to us. Stewardship is our response to that gift.

Even the word "Eucharist" implies stewardship. The word "Eucharist" finds its roots in the Latin word *eucharistia*, which in turn came from the Greek word *eukaristos*, which meant, quite simply, "gratitude" or "thanksgiving." How fitting that we, who are called to be a stewardship people, celebrate at the focal point of every Mass an act of thanksgiving and gratitude — namely, the reception of Jesus' gift to us — the Eucharist.

In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the bishops speak of the Eucharist in this way: "The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of this expansive communion of charity... we enjoy a unique union with Christ and, in Him, with one another. Here His love — indeed, His very Self — flows into us as disciples and, through us and our practice of stewardship to the entire human race."

When we receive Christ's Body in the Holy Eucharist, we hear the minister say, "The Body of Christ." To this, we respond, "Amen" — which means in Hebrew, "Yes; it is so." This is the essence of stewardship. We should enter the Church for Mass out of "gratitude." We recognize the presence of the Lord in Holy Communion, and then we truly receive the Lord. What is left for us to do is the fulfillment of stewardship — that is, sharing what we have received in love of God and neighbor. Our entire experience speaks to stewardship — we are grateful; we recognize the real presence of the Lord; we receive the Lord; and then we share what we have received.

Christ's gift to us through the Eucharist is an invitation to us. We are called to give beyond what is convenient or what may be comfortable. We are called to forgive even when forgiveness may not be deserved; we are called to love even when that love is not returned. We are called to love as God loves us.

The Eucharist is stewardship celebrated. The Mass is more than a ritual. It is an actual encounter with God,



with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We need to respond to the Eucharist with our complete selves. What we experience in the Eucharist should, in turn, translate into our daily lives. We are committed to the Church, which is Christ's body. We show our love for His body by acts of charity and generosity. We spend time in prayer, expressing our gratitude and our love.

God's greatest gift to us is Christ's great love for us — this was shown when He was crucified on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to give us eternal life. God's love for us is without limit, and He offers Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Stewardship is how we respond to that gift.

A Letter From Our Pastor

We Cannot Be Part-Time Christians

Dear Parishioners,

May is traditionally celebrated in the Church as the month of Mary, our Blessed Mother. As the Mother of the Church, she provides us with an example of what it means to be a servant of God and our fellow humans, as well as how to obediently fulfill the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

As Catholics, we are called to model the life of Jesus. That can be difficult, and there are certainly challenges to living as a disciple of Christ. But living stewardship and discipleship brings intense contentment and joy to those who take that risk. As we hear in St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "All things work for good for those who love God."

After Jesus Himself, we look to our Blessed Mother as an ideal steward and an example of what stewardship means. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her life and her ministry in a total spirit of faithfulness and service. She responded to the call to be a disciple. For us to be disciples, we also need to be good stewards of the gifts



we have received. Our Church and our parishes are gifts to us from God.

At no point in Holy Scripture does Jesus tell us that following Him is easy. We know it is not always simple and effortless. It requires dedication and commitment. Pope Francis has said on more than one occasion, "We cannot be part-time Christians and Catholics! We should seek to live our faith at every moment of every day."

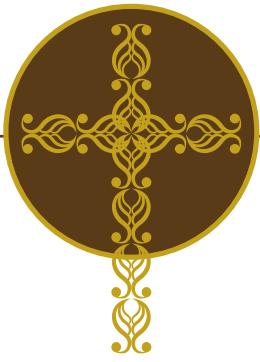
I suspect that is how Mary lived her life from that moment she turned it over to God and His Will. So, let us vow together during this month of Mary to follow her example, and seek to be the kinds of good stewards that will make our faith community even stronger and more effective.

I pray that we all can find the strength to live and practice our faith as we should. This means being faithful to the sacraments and looking for ways to help and serve one another. We have three great parishes – let us make them even greater.

As we hear in Holy Scripture, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). Pray for me, as I pray for you.

In our Father's hands,

Fr. Greg Paffel



Wise Beyond Marlena

If you were to speak to Marlena Bosnak over the phone, you would be shocked to learn that she is only in the sixth grade. Her eloquence and mature outlook on life would lead you to believe you were speaking to someone far beyond her years. In many ways, Marlena is a miracle. The daughter of St. Paul parishioners Peter Bosnak and Sandra Michels, it was 17 years into the couple's marriage before they were blessed with the child they never thought they'd have.

Now a precocious preteen, Marlena continues to be a source of joy not only to her parents but also to her teachers, fellow classmates, parishioners, and countless others. She enjoys learning of any sort, participating in the school archery program, and like most young girls, getting together with friends and having fun. Yet, unlike your typical sixth-grader, Marlena also talks openly about the importance of her faith, mentioning her love for the Beatitudes and describing them simply as "something to live by."

"I feel like God is someone I can tell my problems to – someone



Marlena Bosnak at her First Holy Communion.

who helps me a lot," Marlena says. "I know I'll want that when I'm grown up, too, because I'll have a lot more problems, so I try to keep him in the center of my life."

Having been a student at Holy Family School since kindergarten, Marlena feels the school itself and its pervading Catholicism has played an important role in her journey thus far, shaping her understanding of God and teaching her what really matters

in life. She appreciates that God is a constant topic of each school day, interwoven in morning assembly, at school Masses, within classroom discussions, and even amongst her peers.

"In schools that aren't Catholic, you don't pray in the morning or before meals," Marlena says. "But in a Catholic school, we are able to pray all throughout the day together, strengthening that relationship with God."

"Having Christ-centered relationships helps keep you on track and it makes life easier. We all want to get to heaven. Heaven is paradise and if your friends are there, too, it makes it even better." – Marlena Bosnak

and Her Years *Marlena Bosnak*

Further, Marlena appreciates the smaller classes and all of the “extra things” like the annual Christmas Pageant and Grandparents Day. Marlena also has a particular love for science because she loves “understanding how things work.”

Especially as an only child, she enjoys the “family atmosphere” at Holy Family which allows parents and grandparents to become actively involved and draws everyone into the community. Throughout her time at Holy Family, Marlena has felt blessed to have made truly special, Christ-centered friendships. This is important, she says, because

she hopes to be surrounded by loved ones in heaven someday.

“Having Christ-centered relationships helps keep you on track and it makes life easier,” Marlena says. “We all want to get to heaven. Heaven is paradise and if your friends are there, too, it makes it even better.”

Most of all though, Marlena is grateful to her parents who make sacrifices each and every day to send her to Holy Family School. Though it isn’t as affordable as a public school, Marlena feels that the cost is well worth it, recognizing that Holy Family has helped make her who she is today.

“Having God in your life is really important, and the Catholic school helps make that possible,” Marlena says. “I’m also really thankful for the smaller classes, giving us more time to learn about God and other subjects.”

And as Marlena concludes her final days at Holy Family, she hopes to continue soaking up all the knowledge and faith that she can so that when she moves on to junior high, high school and eventual adulthood, she will be prepared and ready for the tasks ahead. Holding her beloved Beatitudes to her heart, she’ll continue striving to live by the precepts of the faith and, in the process, teach us all what it truly means to be pure of heart.



Marlena and her parents feel that Holy Family School has helped shape her into the confident young lady that she is today.



Beyond providing her with an excellent education, Marlena feels that Holy Family has helped teach her the importance of God and having faith in your life.



The Blessings of the Catholic Mass

It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States, many of us wonder why we must go to Mass on Sunday.

However, if we really understood what the Mass is and how we participate in the celebration, we would instead be asking why we are, as sinful human beings, blessed with the opportunity to participate in the holy Mass. If we simply understood and recognized that God's infinite goodness allows us to do so, we would be eager to go to Mass on Sunday and every other day of the week.

It is true, however, that all Catholics are obliged to "Keep holy the Lord's Day" by sharing in the Mass. But why are we obliged?

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the center of our faith. It is "the summit toward which all activity of the Church is directed" and it is "the font from which all her power flows" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 10). It does not exhaust the activity of the Church, but is most certainly her greatest work.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is literally re-presented to the Father during Mass, and Christ allows us to join with Him in offering that sacrifice. Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the

cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

Believe it or not, the sacrifice of Calvary is really, truly happening at our parish, every time the Mass is offered.

Our participation in Mass gives us the strength and the graces we need to live our lives as Christ's disciples. So what does this mean for us?

This means we have a front row seat to the sacrifice of Calvary. Given such a gift, how can we not accept it?

We also have a chance to join in Jesus' sacrifice by offering our own prayers and petitions. As an example, what better gift could we give deceased loved ones than the offering of prayers for their souls in purgatory?

Most importantly, we have the opportunity to receive the Eucharist, followed by quiet time, when we offer sincere thanks and allow God's graces to fill us. Think of all you are missing when you do not properly prepare yourself to receive the Holy Eucharist.

We ought to joyfully head to Church each Sunday, eager to give God glory in the greatest way we can! Attending and actively participating in Mass every Sunday is our obligation as Catholics. But we should not allow the fact that our attendance is "required" to stop us from going. Nor should we allow our laziness to overshadow the amazing privilege and the many blessings that lay before us in the Mass.

The pope and the bishops direct us to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy every Sunday because they know there is no better way to keep holy the Lord's day — giving God thanks for all He has done for us in the most powerful way possible. They know that, through the Mass, we gain the graces necessary to live our lives in this world.

Our ability to participate in the Mass is a wonderful gift, not a great burden. May Christ enlighten our minds and hearts to clearly see the wonders of the celebration, and give us great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate.



Poepping Family Giving Their Time and Talent to St. Paul's Through Music and Love

If you spend any length of time getting to know Amy and Eugene Poepping, the word that might keep coming to mind is “love” – love for family; love for music; love for their church; and love in all the ways they’ve found to serve the One who is Love.

Married 35 years, Amy and Eugene are the parents of four grown children, two teenagers, and will welcome their 11th grandchild this fall. Amy homeschools daughters Gemma, 16, and Marita, 14, while Eugene drives for FedEx and works part-time as a janitor at St. Paul's.

In the midst of a busy life, they have still found time to offer their talents through music ministry and as a sponsor couple helping engaged men and women prepare for marriage both one-on-one and at marriage retreats.

“We do the ‘Married Love’ talk,” Amy explains of the retreats. “It can be really fun to visit with these young people that are experiencing the new love. We hope that we’re sharing with them that even 30-odd years later, it can still be wonderful and exciting and rewarding.”

Amy continues by saying that as she and Eugene share personal aspects that have helped them achieve a long and healthy marriage, they hope to show how fulfilling a Catholic marriage can be.

“Not only do we share the idea of the marriage covenant, but just how important faith is to your marriage and how to live out the Catholic faith,” she says.

Also rewarding is the Poepping's favorite way to serve the parish, participating as a family in music ministry. Eugene and Amy both sing during Mass a few times each month, and Gemma sometimes joins them on piano. They've recorded albums as a family to sell for parish fundraisers, and Amy says having their children join them in performing for Christmas Eve Mass is very special to her.



Whether it's singing, providing guidance to engaged couples, or simply making sure the church stays beautiful, Amy and Eugene Poepping have found a multitude of ways to show their love for the Lord within our parish walls. (From left) Gemma, Amy, Marita, and Eugene.

“Music can touch the soul, and it's really an extension of a beautiful prayer,” she says. “I love music and it's a great way to pray in a non-traditional way.”

Eugene says what keeps them both motivated to continue to serve St. Paul's so faithfully is a desire to give back to a faith community that's been there for them in the past.

“Four years ago, our second daughter had a child named Donovan who was born with a heart defect,” Amy recalls. “The parish at that time was so supportive. We did a musical fundraiser, and people who came were so generous and it was such a beautiful thing to experience. It was made clear then what an awesome parish St. Paul's really is.”

“We're very thankful to be a part of St. Paul's Parish – to be a part of such a strong faith community,” Eugene adds.

“We're very thankful to be a part of St. Paul's Parish – to be a part of such a strong faith community.” – Eugene Poepping



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Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:00 p.m. - St. Paul's
Saturday 5:00 p.m. - Our Lady of the Angels
Saturday 8:00 p.m. - St. Paul's
Sunday 8:00 a.m. - St. Paul's
Sunday 8:30 a.m. - St. Alexius
Sunday 10:00 a.m. - St. Paul's
Sunday 10:30 a.m. - Our Lady of the Angels

Reconciliation Schedule

Thursday 4:00 p.m. - St. Paul's
Saturday 3:00 p.m. - St. Paul's
Saturday 4:00 p.m. - Our Lady of the Angels
Sunday 8:00 a.m. - St. Alexius

Connie Blank-Meier *continued from front cover*

closer to Jesus in the Mass. I consider it an honor and a privilege.”

After Connie's first husband died more than 20 years ago, she found herself thinking about how she could become involved in the community. She knew she needed to do something new, and she prayed about it. So, when someone was needed to take over as coordinator of the parish's annual Community Christmas Dinner, she decided to step up with her family behind her 100 percent.

Today, Connie's family, including her grandchildren, and volunteers from the faith community feed approximately 300 people every Christmas at the local American Legion club.

“It is for people who might be alone or who can't afford dinner,” Connie says. “We prepare the food and tables and decorate for Christmas. A family comes in every year to sing carols. It is completely community-funded, mainly by local businesses. There is no charge.”

Connie would like to thank all the faith community members for being kind and generous and for teaching her

so much over the years. The people are the highlight of her work, which she considers a rewarding ministry in itself.

“If you are looking for a way to become involved, come in and chat with me,” Connie says. “There are so many different areas in which we need stewards. Have confidence in your capabilities, and I'd be happy to help you do whatever you feel called to do.”



The Community Christmas Dinner

“If you are looking for a way to become involved, come in and chat with me. There are so many different areas in which we need stewards. Have confidence in your capabilities, and I'd be happy to help you do whatever you feel called to do.” – Connie Blank-Meier