

The Young Church THE CATHOLIC ACCENT

VOLUME 62, No. 2, FALL 2022

TEENS on a MISSION

**Making A
Difference In
Appalachia**



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Listening Session**

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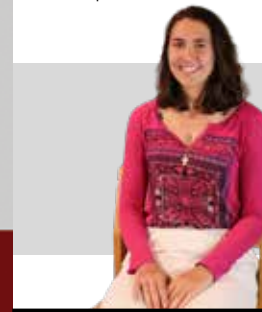
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COVER DESIGN: JOHN ZYLKA

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BISHOP KULICK

The Young Church

When I look back on my religious formation as a youth, I think about how the Church was presented to those of my generation and before. Our neighborhood parishes were set up to be places of structure and of community. Our families would lead us to the doors of the church, sometimes with a gentle nudge. Inside those doors we would find activities, educational opportunities, committees, sports programs, scouting programs and social events. People from different age groups would welcome us and make us feel at home as part of one big community of faith.

Nobody can really pinpoint when that all changed. Family priorities became fundamentally different. Unlike in the past, many youth are no longer escorted to the parish doors, and they miss the tremendous opportunity of being immersed in the life of a parish and a faith community.

Jesus Christ provides us a tremendous opportunity to return to our parishes and to our strength, which is found in the Holy Eucharist. We can do that by fully participating in the Eucharistic Revival, which was announced by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and a revival that I fully embrace. It is an opportunity to evangelize to all Catholics over the next three years and to prioritize communications that reach and impact youth and young adults.

During our winter and spring Parish Listening Sessions and through the thousands of surveys sent in to gather input from parishioners, I received a common question everywhere I went: "Bishop, I made sure my children were brought up in the faith. I took them to church. Now they do not

even go to church. Where did I go wrong?" My response is very simple: "You did not go wrong. You did exactly what you were supposed to do." I see the concern and pain in their faces as they express to me that they feel that they are not passing on an important legacy to their children and grandchildren — their faith and ultimately, the gift of salvation. It is something we all need to think about.

We have to consciously and purposefully go out as missionary disciples. We need to meet our young people where they are in life. We need to be present for them. We need to be a source of strength and inspiration for them and, as our Holy Father reminds us, we need to accompany them to the doors of our parishes and into the lives of our faith communities. Simply turning on the lights and opening the doors, creating dynamic programs and waiting for people to come in, is no longer a model that works. We need to find a new way.

In the Diocese of Greensburg, we began that process last month. I was delighted to have the opportunity to gather with more than 120 young adults at Christ Our Shepherd Center. It was an opportunity for me to hear directly from them about their needs. I listened to feedback on examples of experiences that will engage young adults catechetically, spiritually and socially to entice them to be more active in the life of our Church and parishes.

We often hear that the youth are the future of the Church. I believe that saying should be rephrased to "the youth are our Church," and it is up to all of us to invite them on the journey of discipleship so they may know, serve and love the Lord more and enrich their parishes and our Church with their gifts and talents.

+ Larry J. Kulick

The Most Reverend
Larry J. Kulick, J.C.L.
Bishop of Greensburg

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PHOTOS: MARY SEAMANS AND JORDAN WHITEKO

Bishop Larry J. Kulick at the Young Adult Catholic: Creating The Immersive Experience held last month at Christ our Shepherd Center in Greensburg.



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Kentucky Youth Project: *TEENS on a MISSION*

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PHOTOS: SUBMITTED



Teens, adults make a difference in lives of impoverished Appalachian residents

BY MARY SEAMANS

Summer for most teenagers means trips to the beach, fun with friends and relaxation. For a group of teens from St. Barbara Parish, Harrison City, and Mother of Sorrows, Murrysburg, their summer break included a selfless devotion of time and service to families in need in Kentucky.

The parish's Kentucky Project began 16 years ago when Sister of St. Francis Alice Retzner spoke to parishioners about the plight of the people in Appalachia. Her heartfelt discussion moved parishioners to work together to support and help those in need, an effort coordinated by parishioners Barbara and Al Kustra and former pastor Monsignor V. Paul Fitzmaurice.

Parishioners adopt children in Kentucky whose families are in dire financial need. They commit to sending them at least



one week's worth of non-perishable food and supplies each month until they no longer have the need or until the youngest child graduates from high school.

But the parish didn't stop there. Christie Smith, former Director of Youth Ministry, felt guided to organize a mission trip for parish teenagers and adults. Smith reached out to Kirsten Thorstad, Parish Administrator at Church of the Good Shepherd Parish in

Campton, Ky., whom Smith knew from graduate school, and plans began to fall into place.

Nineteen teenagers and five adults quickly signed up for the Kentucky Youth Project trip. They held fundraisers to support the construction projects they planned. Two dads stepped in to make sure the teens had the right equipment and supplies. 84 Lumber provided lumber for the teen's mission outreach.

Smith said the teenage volunteers worked hard and never complained because they wanted to make a difference. They also were able to get to know the families they were serving.

The teenagers built a new deck, worked on a roof, repaired a mailbox and installed a new front door on the home of a woman named Ellen.

Afterward, Ellen became emotional and couldn't stop crying in gratitude for what the teenagers had done for her, Smith recalled.

At a second home for a woman named Dorothy, they built a new deck and a wheelchair ramp. Smith described a mutual feeling of joy between the young people and the homeowners.

The teens were also able to have some fun and build relationships with each other. They went ziplining and underground kayaking, and also spent time in prayer, including a rosary walk through a national park, praise and worship nights, and Mass and dinner with a priest from Appalachia.

The Kentucky Project and its outreach continues at St. Barbara Parish. Currently, more than

100 volunteers continue to send food, support and the love of Christ.

If you are interested in helping, donations can be sent by check to:

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PHOTO: JORDAN WHITEKO

Call to Sisterhood

St. Thomas More University Parish guides a vocational journey

BY ELISABETH SMITH

Growing up in the Pittsburgh suburb of Greentree, Courtney Alexander was active in the Church. Her mother insisted that she and her brother attend Mass every Sunday. They both became altar servers at their home parish, St. Margaret of Scotland. Her active service in her youth to her parish compelled her aunts to question her about the possibility that Alexander might consider a vocation as a nun. It wasn't top of mind

for Alexander, who imagined that her life would transition to college, marriage, children and serving the Lord through mission work. But she always felt that God was calling her to something else.

When Alexander became a student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), she joined the basketball team. Her devoutly Catholic coach asked her if she ever considered becoming a religious sister. Alexander paused. She started to feel conflicted because she dreamt of a family, but also

felt a divine calling to serve God and the Church.

"There wasn't a particular moment that I felt called to religious life, but I think over time the Lord did plant little seeds in my head," Alexander said.

That is when her discernment to join the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (SOLT) began.

It was only this summer that she felt pulled to fully heed that calling, after earning her undergraduate biology/pre-medical degree and graduate degree in health care

administration from IUP. She spent her student years as part of St. Thomas More University Parish, which was established to support the faithful at IUP, and participated actively in the Catholic Student Association (CSA). Alexander was inspired by the Capuchin Franciscan monks who oversee the church and its activities.

"St. Thomas More is probably the biggest reason I have grown in my faith over the last six years," Alexander said. "The Capuchins were there my last two years at IUP, and before that, I didn't see people in their religious life, living out their vocation.

So, it was wonderful to see the Capuchins so joyful and living out their mission work, which I always wanted to do. They opened my eyes to celibacy, mission work and just giving your life to Christ alone."

She names Father Richard Owens, Father Tage Danielson and Father Andrew Corriente at St. Thomas More University Parish as particular guides in her journey. And she also credits the Capuchin Franciscans with invigorating the church's CSA—an organization in which Alexander held several roles, including spreading the word on social media, serving on the leadership team and organizing Sunday dinners for students.

The CSA has seen growth in participation during Alexander's time as a member, and she credits the Capuchin friars with helping students like her understand God's call to them in a welcoming environment.

"I have met students who were nervous about joining CSA because they don't know enough for Bible studies," Alexander said. "But God's will is to be faithful to your faithfulness. It is the least intimidating atmosphere I can think of and to be with people that love the Lord is really refreshing."

'The quickest prayer God answered'

This summer, as Alexander finished her time at IUP, she felt the conviction more to seriously discern her call to serve as a religious sister. But the choice was a big one, and she visited an online site to try narrowing down the religious communities that fit her faith. She found 71 communities.

"I took a week to look over all the material, but it was too overwhelming," Alexander said.

She attended a vocations fair at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, and the Lord took over from there. Alexander started speaking with a nun who asked her, frankly, what she wanted to do. Alexander explained her competing desires to have a family and be a nun.

"She said, 'If the Lord is calling you to this, he can handle this and is going to take the responsibility to show the community to you,'" Alexander recalled. "She then prayed that He would take control for me and show me the community if He really wanted me to join.

"In that moment, I looked up and I saw SOLT sisters," she added. "I recognized their habit from watching videos in college of Sister Miriam James Heidland. So, I went right over there, talked to the vocations



PHOTO: JENNIFER MIELE

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director and knew I didn't want to talk to anyone else. That's the quickest prayer that God ever answered for me."

Steps toward sisterhood

Today, Alexander is in her aspirancy with SOLT, which means she is spending four months living with the sisters, wearing lay clothing and gaining an understanding of their way of life.

When she is finished, she will return home for two weeks to decide if she wishes to return as a postulant, which is a year-long phase. Following that, Alexander would become a novitiate for two years, which she explains would be divided into a year devoted to prayer and silence, and a second year focused

on mission work in any of SOLT's convents across the globe, including South and Central America, Australia and the Philippines.

"I feel very called to go wherever they send me," Alexander said, adding that she hopes her graduate degree in health care administration can be utilized. Afterwards, she will take her first vows, becoming a fully professed sister after nearly five years. Alexander has chosen Mary, the mother of Christ as her inspiration in her vocational journey. It is a holy connection that guides her and connects her to what she says is a most beautiful journey.

Murrysville woman discerns her calling

Catherine Federline, a parishioner of Mother of Sorrows Parish, Murrysville, is participating in her aspirancy with the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Cresson. She will spend the next six months becoming accustomed to life in the convent while joining in prayer and community life.

For most of her life, Federline felt called to a religious life.

"There have been many moments throughout my life that have confirmed that," she said.

Most recently, it was the peace and joy of her decision that served as a confirmation.

"I really do just love the sisters' way of life and feel very much that the Lord has formed my heart to live that way of life."

Federline said her family helped foster her discernment. She is the daughter of David and Raissa Federline and the niece of the late Father Thomas A. Federline, former pastor of St. Pius X Parish and Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, both in Mount Pleasant.

"It was the witness of my uncle, my grandparents and my parents and the opportunities they gave me to learn and become more involved in the faith. I don't think I would be at this point without them," she said.

A graduate of Franciscan University, Steubenville, Ohio, she hopes to take her final vows in a few years. Please continue to pray for her as she continues her journey.

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Far from home, close to God

Seminarian John Torres, a long way from his native Brazil, finds a new home in the Diocese of Greensburg

BY ROBIN MULL

John Torres, 38, thought his life plans in Brazil were on track. He graduated from university with a journalism degree and then became engaged to his longtime girlfriend. For Torres, life was moving in the direction that he planned. But it was a family memory that opened his heart to hear and to discern that God had other plans for him. It was a call that would lead him on a more than 5,000 mile journey from his home and family to Saint Vincent Seminary in Latrobe to advance his studies towards the priesthood.

"I remember going to Mass with my family when I was a kid, sitting in the first pew, amazed at what was happening. I didn't know what it was, but it was beautiful and that's what I wanted to be," Torres recalled. "I started thinking about that vocation that I was trying not to answer to. And in my mind I started to think, if I enter seminary and then I see that's not my vocation, I can always leave and continue my life. But if I get married, and see that's not my vocation, there's no way back."

Prayer played an important part in listening and responding to the Lord's call and to discern his life-changing decision.

Below: Itapira, Amparo, Sao Paulo, Brazil.



John Torres serving at Father Chris Pujol's Priestly Ordination.



John Torres with Bishop Larry J. Kulick, seminary graduation.



From left: John Torres, Leonard Wang, Ivan Soma, Balint Juhasz, Mauricio Sanchez, Father Paul Taylor, President of Saint Vincent College, and Alperen Aksehir.



From left: Joseph Torres (brother), John Torres, Lucia Torres (mother), Antonio Toress (father) and Solange Stafocher (brother's girlfriend).



Left: Cancao Nova, Amparo, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

That leap of faith brought Torres to the Diocese of Greensburg. After five years of studying in Latrobe, he graduated in May 2022. Scholarship commitments would require Torres to return to his home and the Diocese of Amparo in Campinas, Brazil. Once again, Torres felt God was asking him to do more.

During his time at the seminary and through his experience in parishes across the Diocese of Greensburg, the dwindling number of priests caused Torres to become

concerned. He knew he wanted to help. Torres felt God sent him on this path to the Diocese for a reason. This time, it was for the Church and its people, the faithful across our four-county Diocese.

Immersing himself in the culture wasn't easy for Torres. He didn't speak English, didn't know anyone and was thousands of miles away from his family. He knew with the mercy of Christ and perseverance, he would be successful.

It was through his trust in his discernment that Torres says he finally feels at home in the Diocese. He says he is grateful for his summer assignment at the parishes in the Yough Catholic Community.



John Torres with Rita Pratt, St. Rita Parish, Connellsville.

PHOTOS: MARY SEAMANS AND SUBMITTED

Left: Youth summer camp, Amparo, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

"This is my Diocese. These are the people I'll be working with, my flock," he said.

He knows all of the struggles were part of God's plan to prepare him for this stage of life to use his vocation and life experiences to make him stronger and to help people get closer to God's presence.

"All of us have the power that God gave us to touch other people's lives, and we can go to heaven together," Torres said. "My heart is at peace, and I am where God wants me to be."

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TUNED IN

Brothers share faith on WAOB® airwaves

BY ELISABETH SMITH

Growing up in a family of 11 siblings with a rich Catholic faith, brothers Jim and Joe Parrish knew they should look to God when they felt lost.

So, when both hit a professional crossroads as young men, the Bolivar natives and parishioners of Holy Family Parish, Seward, turned to prayer and discovered a surprising opportunity.

"In 2010, I was studying at Franciscan University and figuring out what to do with my life," Jim said. "I was thinking of changing my major and looking for a summer job when I approached the General Manager of We Are One Body® Radio (WAOB), to see if they had any summer jobs."

Joe was in a similar situation. At 18 and fresh out of high school, he wasn't sure what was next. Thankfully, WAOB® staff told his brother they were interested in interviewing both of them, and Joe followed in Jim's footsteps to check out the opportunities there.

"I was really praying and discerning about the electrical union. I met a wonderful woman who is now my wife and we heard of this new radio station where my brother was trying to get his foot in the door," Joe said. "They told him they pray about everyone they hire, and they really envisioned brothers working together."

Following their interviews, both attended a Catholic retreat as they prayed about their futures — and both returned home to a phone call that would set them on a clear path that was true to their faith.

"The day I got back, I got a call not just offering me a summer job, but a full-time job," Jim recalled of WAOB, or We Are One Body® Radio, which broadcasts at 106.7 FM, 860 AM and 1510 AM across the greater Pittsburgh area.

Joe also received a job offer, and the two have been helping offer the WAOB® listeners a "little window into the life of the Church" for more than a decade.

Joe is an audio technician who wears many hats, including maintaining the broadcast towers, fitting cathedrals with sound equipment and even coordinating all the remote recordings for the studio.

Jim started out in a dual role of an On-Air Host and Production Engineer and is now in a dual role of the Manager of Production and an On-Air Host. As the Manager of Production, Jim oversees the WAOB® Staff that is responsible for recording, editing, and producing the programming that you hear on We Are One Body® Radio.

Jim and Joe take pride in the mission of WAOB®, of which, one of the main goals is to broadcast the magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church - including the ongoing teaching of the Pope and bishops. Priests, in a supportive role to the Holy Father and the bishops, offer clarification and meditations on those teachings for the WAOB® listeners. The programming includes daily broadcasts of the Holy Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, broadcasts from the Vatican, devotional prayers, and sacred music. Understanding that God, through the Holy Spirit, is the real teacher, We Are One Body® Radio does its best to offer a meditative, prayerful environment for its listeners.

"Many of us want to have a closer relationship with Jesus and desire a deeper understanding of the Catholic Faith", Jim stated. "However, in our culture today, it's a bit taboo to talk about our Faith."



PHOTOS: JOHN ZYLKA

The WAOB® staff: Jim Parrish, Michael Steele and Tim Callahan, standing from left, with Joe Parrish and Sarah Krnosky.

WAOB® Radio offers a publicly available venue where the teachings of the Church, the mysteries of the Church, and the beautiful life of the Catholic Church can be shared with all."

"I think that we all need to step out of our comfort zone by being a model of Christ and a witness of love in our daily actions."

The brothers say their call to WAOB® has been a blessing in both faith and family.

"My brother and I used to talk about working together and how cool that would be," Joe said. "Never did we think we'd be working together within our faith. I'm extremely blessed to work in my faith, I know that."

Jim echoes his brother's feelings and adds that the WAOB® staff is like a tight-knit family. His work allows him and Joe to collaborate while also utilizing their talents differently in service to God, through the station.

"It's great to have him here as part of this journey," Jim said. "I think for most people it would be a dream to work with a brother, sister or best friend."



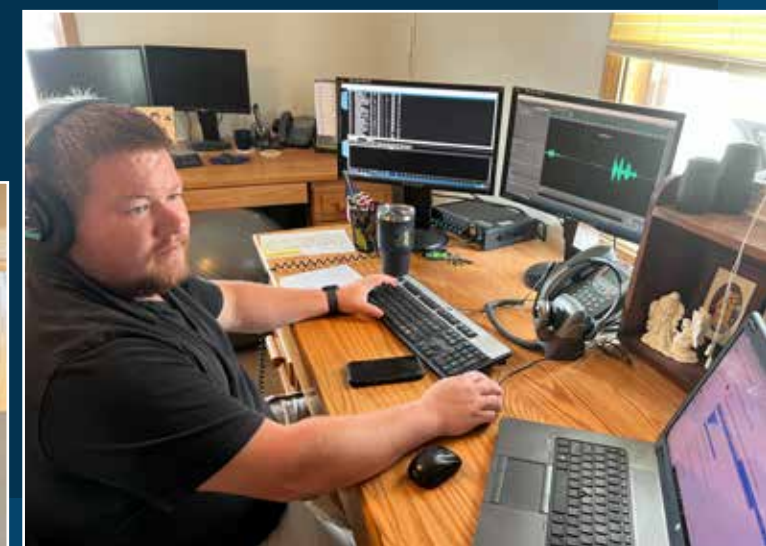
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Why not me?



PHOTOS: SUBMITTED AND JORDAN WHITEKO

Donor Kristen Hughes-Marhefka, left, and recipient Therese Reinhardt.

'Divine intervention' leads St. Mary, Mother of God parishioner to give gift of life

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BY CLIFF GORSKI

Kristen Hughes-Marhefka likes to be a good gift-giver. She gives the gift of her time and talent at her parish, St. Mary, Mother of God Parish, Freeport, where she serves the young church as a youth group volunteer. She is also Secretary on the Board of Directors for Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Greensburg.

The busy physical therapist was taking a break one day, scrolling through Facebook, when she came across a post about Therese Reinhardt, a close family friend who was struggling with dialysis treatments and in desperate need of a kidney transplant. Hughes-Marhefka paused for a moment and offered prayers.

A year later, during a family beach vacation, Hughes-Marhefka ran into Reinhardt's husband, Alan, who told her his wife was still

searching for a donor. No family members were a donor match. Hughes-Marhefka asked him, "Why not test me?"

Reinhardt believes it was divine intervention.

"God is in all decisions, and I felt like Krissy acting on her intuition was divinely guided. I felt this was a match that was meant to be," Therese Reinhardt said.

After returning from vacation, Hughes-Marhefka went to the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute at Montefiore Hospital in Pittsburgh for testing. A month later, results showed that she was a perfect donor match for Reinhardt.

"I called her a day before her birthday to say, 'Game on — we are a match, so let's exchange this gift,'" Hughes-Marhefka said.

Being an organ donor requires major surgery.

Hughes-Marhefka's mother asked her faith community at daily Mass for prayers. It became a prayer chain that extended around the globe.

The transplant surgery was scheduled for November 2021. Three days before the surgery, Hughes-Marhefka tested positive for COVID-19, so surgery was postponed until Dec. 10, 2021. Hughes-Marhefka used the extra time to prepare for the holidays, knowing she would need recovery time.

"I did my Christmas shopping, I wrapped my presents, I baked my cookies, and the final gift I gave away was my kidney," Hughes-Marhefka said.

The surgery was a success, and both women have recovered. Hughes-Marhefka's first big outing after the surgery was to attend Christmas Eve

Mass at her parish knowing that she gave Reinhardt a Christmas gift of life.

"I just wanted to do this so that my friend could have her life back," Hughes-Marhefka said.

Reinhardt, who used to plan her life and career around a dialysis machine, says her life is very different thanks to Hughes-Marhefka's lifesaving gift. She was able to travel to California to attend her son's wedding, and Hughes-Marhefka was delighted to be able to join the family on the trip.

"I don't know how to put it into words except to say the joy that it brings to me and my family and the things that I am able to do now and the good that I can do in these extra years — all of those are blessings that cannot be underestimated," Reinhardt said.

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DIGGING for TREASURE

Research into family history reveals legacy of faith

A note from the writer: Looking back on the Church's history, many of the parishioners here in the Diocese of Greensburg are descendants of immigrants whose homelands were scattered all over the world. Recently, our family discovered that our patriarch, Florino Scalzitti, immigrated to the United States from Italy and died in the Spanish Flu pandemic more than 100 years ago. Five generations later, his great-great-grandchildren are emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic — the deadliest disease in American history. Uncovering that family history has been like digging for treasure.

BY JENNIFER MIELE

The theme of Vacation Bible School at Immaculate Conception Parish in Irwin this summer was “Digging for Treasure.” The faith formation staff and volunteers used parables to help students unlock the Bible’s teachings.

“The stories that Jesus tells have a meaning. Each has a lesson in it,” Susan Cheplic, Director of Faith Formation, told the children.

“Just as Jesus taught with parables in the ways the people of the time would understand, we can look at the parables again today

as instructions for us and ways we can apply Jesus’ teaching to our lives,” added Tyler Randolph, Director of Music Ministry.

In the crowd of nearly 150 students were my own two children, Francesca, 9, and Vivienne, 8. They recently began digging for their own treasure, uncovering family stories from more than 100 years ago and discovering that they are fifth-generation parishioners at Immaculate Conception Parish.



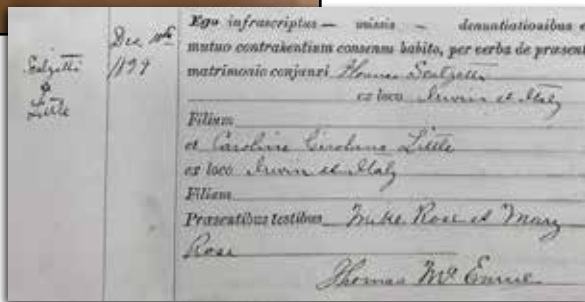
Tyler Randolph



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Left:
Florino and
Carolina

Below:
Marriage record



The COVID-19 pandemic gave us some together time at home, which we used to research our family history. We knew that our family patriarch, Florino Scalzitti, immigrated from Italy in the early 1890s, married his wife, Carolina, fathered 11 children, and owned both a coal mine and general store in Yukon, Westmoreland County. But an internet search led us to something totally unexpected: Florino’s grave was located in our own parish cemetery.

With the help of parish staff, we uncovered their marriage record dated Dec. 10, 1899. They went on to have 11 children, including my grandfather, Art. According to parish records, at least three of his siblings were baptized at Immaculate Conception Parish.



Right: Art and Julia



PHOTOS: JENNIFER MIELE



Left: Florino, Carolina and eight of the children
Above: Nine of the children

With the discovery of these records, we began digging for additional treasure, hoping to find out even more about our family history.

“They were all born in Montenero Val Cocchiara, which is Molise, Italy. That’s about an hour and a half from Naples by car,” said Loretta Scalzitti, our family historian, who traced our heritage back to the 1700s.

Florino was born in 1873 and arrived in the United States at just 15 years old.

We also discovered that Florino died of Spanish Flu at age 45, 100 years before COVID-19 changed the lives of his great-great-grandchildren.

The Spanish Flu pandemic ripped through Western Pennsylvania. Many churches closed to prevent the spread. According to newspaper articles, countless

temporary hospitals were set up across the region. Churches, borough buildings and fraternal halls housed emergency wards. And according to experts, the virus was most devastating to people in their 20s, 30s and 40s, taking the lives of many just two to three days after symptoms appeared.

In 1918, isolation and quarantine were the only defense against the spread of the virus. We learned that Florino had to miss the birth of his youngest child because he was infected with the Spanish Flu. Carolina named the child Florino after his father. But sadly, the two would never meet. Florino Sr. died when his new baby was just 5 days old.

Carolina was left alone to raise 11 children. She eventually remarried but died just seven years later. Older siblings raised younger siblings and kept them close to the Church during decades of hardship and struggle. Time went on, and the family tree grew too large to stay close-knit.

But the Catholic faith continued to be passed down through the generations, who have since lived through their own pandemic. Two years after the onset of COVID-19, Francesca and Vivienne were finally able to gather for worship

at Vacation Bible School. They are part of the young church, who now dig for treasure in the lessons of the Bible. Our job is to help them find what they seek.



Right: Vivienne and
Francesca Cinti



Left: The Immaculate
Conception Parish, Irwin

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Marches for Life

Buses planned for Pennsylvania March for Life September 19

The Diocese of Greensburg will provide bus transportation for the Pennsylvania March for Life Monday, Sept. 19, in Harrisburg. A free-will offering will be taken on each bus to help defray the cost. Participants will attend a rally, march around the Capitol, attend Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral and join local elected officials for a reception in the Capitol. Buses will leave from 12 locations around the Diocese:

Bus 1: Christ the King Parish, Leechburg, and St. Margaret Mary Parish, Lower Burrell

Bus 2: Mother of Sorrows Parish, Murrysville, St. Barbara Parish, Harrison City, and St. Agnes Parish, North Huntingdon

Bus 3: Holy Cross Parish, Youngwood

Bus 4: St. Joseph Parish, Uniontown, St. Rita Parish, Connellsville, and St. Pius X Parish, Mount Pleasant

Bus 5: Church of the Resurrection Parish, Clymer, St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, Indiana, and SS. Simon and Jude Parish, Blairsville

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Thomas
Octave

Director of Sacred Music named to prestigious committee creating a eucharistic culture in our parishes.

BY CLIFF GORSKI

Thomas Octave, Director of Sacred Music for the Diocese of Greensburg, is one of 21 liturgical leaders from around the country to work to foster a eucharistic culture in parishes, schools and dioceses as a way of promoting deeper affiliation with the Church. Octave, who is also an Associate Professor of Music at Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, will join priests, parish leaders, educators, lay ministers and other professionals as a member of the two-year Mathis Liturgical Leadership Program at Notre Dame University. The program provides for a unique opportunity for education and formation centered around a major pastoral issue facing the Church that intersects with the liturgical-sacramental life.

From 2022 to 2024, this cohort will focus on integrating a eucharistic culture in parishes, schools and dioceses as a way of promoting deeper affiliation with the Church. Over the course of these two years, informed by their coursework and working in collaboration with experts, each

participant will design and work toward the completion of a project, teaching resource and/or publication. Mathis Liturgical Leaders will also become ambassadors of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy (NDCL) throughout the United States.

Octave has already spent a week in course study at Notre Dame. Additional study weeks are planned in Rome and San Antonio, Texas. Octave says the course study will focus on the dimensions of a eucharistic culture, which include reverence, integral or integrated catechesis, popular Catholicism and devotional life, and eucharistic solidarity.

"The liturgy, as Pope Francis has recently highlighted in his Apostolic Letter, 'Desiderio Desideravi,' is the place to create an encounter and healing as eucharistic communities of love," Octave explained.

"The work of our cohort is to create meaningful projects that will assist the Church in the United States in creating a eucharistic culture in our parishes. I hope that my work with this gifted cohort will be able to benefit the Diocese of Greensburg in a special way."

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has launched a three-year Eucharistic Revival in the United States. During that time, the Diocese of Greensburg will focus on producing catechetical resources about the centrality of the Mass; distributing resource materials for Diocesan leaders, priests and faith formation leaders; coordinating Diocesan-wide nights of adoration and confession; and gathering Lenten catechetical resources and adoration opportunities. Octave says the 21-member cohort will rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the love of the liturgy.

"We hope to share ways in which in this important time of the Eucharistic Revival, we can rely on the richness of the liturgy to cultivate a liturgical culture that is truly rooted in the love of God in our dioceses, parishes, neighborhoods and families," Octave said.



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