

THE JOURNEY

Photo Credit
David Swenson

December
2025

Pelican Valley Catholic Community Newsletter
Our Lady of Victory, St. Elizabeth, St. Leonard



Dear parishioners of our ACC



tory and that His Spirit continues to awaken hearts, even in the most unexpected places. It means embracing every cross with courage.

Mary teaches us that every “yes” opens the door to life, hope, and mission. Just as she fully embraced God’s plan, we are called to be instruments of Christ in our community: supporting young people, strengthening our parishes and ministries, and keeping the faith alive, without giving in to difficulties.

May our hearts say, with the same confidence and courage as Mary: “Let it be done to me according to your word.” May every “yes” we give to God turn our shadows into light, our doubts into hope, and our ACC into a living reflection of Christ’s love.

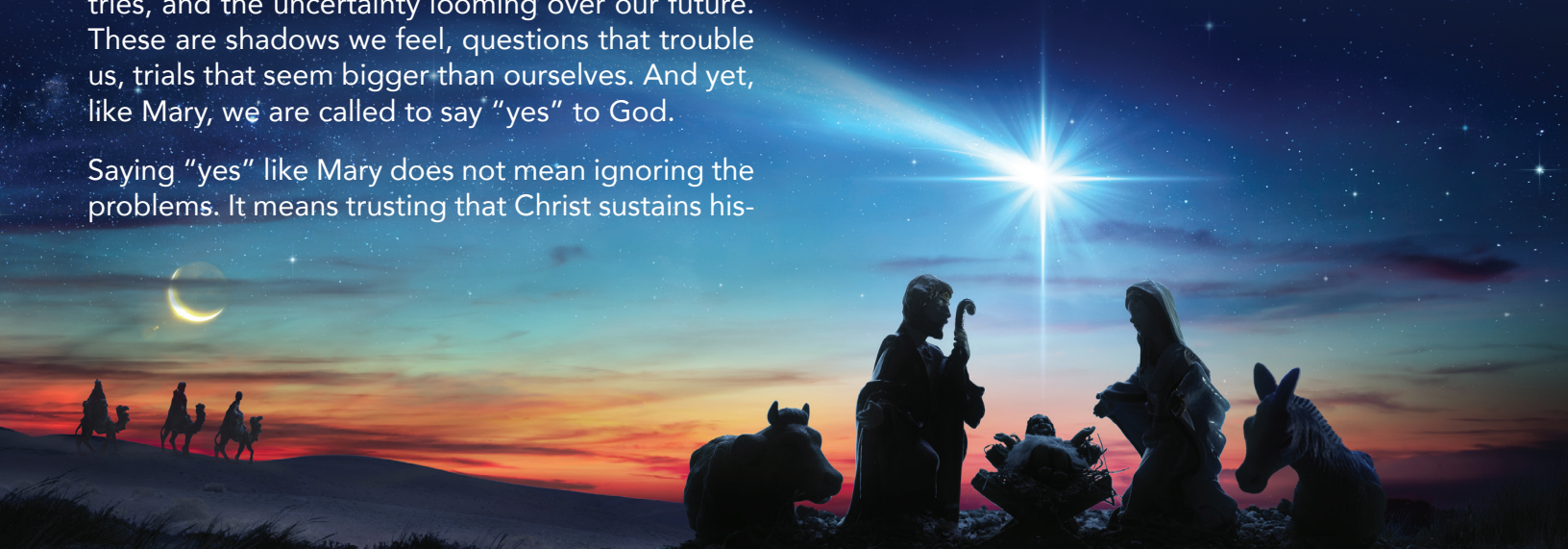
Christ lives. Christ reigns. Christ is here. And wherever He is, our brave response—our Marian “yes”—always produces life, hope, and renewal.

The Gospel of Luke shows us Mary, a humble and courageous young woman, facing an announcement that would change her life and the course of history: God called her to be the mother of the Savior. Her response, her faith-filled “yes,” teaches us that surrendering to God does not depend on comfort or certainty, but on complete trust in His will, even when everything seems impossible or uncertain.

Today, our community faces challenges: the lack of vocations, the weariness of our parishes and ministries, and the uncertainty looming over our future. These are shadows we feel, questions that trouble us, trials that seem bigger than ourselves. And yet, like Mary, we are called to say “yes” to God.

Saying “yes” like Mary does not mean ignoring the problems. It means trusting that Christ sustains his-

*Dolcar Montenegro,
ACC Parish Staff Member*



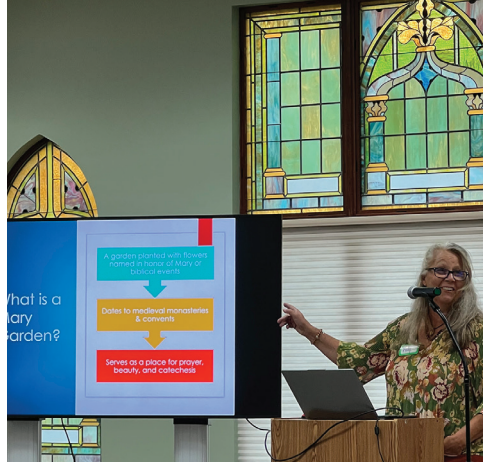
Come and 'Revive'

By: Rhonda Antrim Petersen

Another successful Revive night was had on October 23, at Our Lady of Victory. This was the fourth one for the year and we are so excited about how well received it's been. As a reminder, Revive is a new woman's event for our entire ACC and community, where all are welcome to come for fellowship, build relationships and find support on life's journey, through faith, friendship and community.

Maritza, our ACC bookkeeper shared her touching journey of the struggles with being a young unwed mom. Even after marriage, she spoke of some of the marital struggles when God wasn't center in their lives. Moving to Fergus Falls and putting God in the center has changed their lives.

We invite all women, Catholic or not, to come to these events. In 2026 we plan to hold four events, and if you know somebody who has an inspiring faith journey, or you feel inspired to share your story, please reach out to Diane Aschnewitz.



What started as six to eight deliveries each month ballooned greatly during the government shutdown to 31 deliveries in November. Six teams of delivery personnel were formed both from OLV and the Naz to meet the need. A total of 288 shares of fresh fruit, milk, eggs, potatoes, bread and non-perishables were distributed to people in need. Dozens of people in vehicles had to be turned away as they sold out of the food allotment.

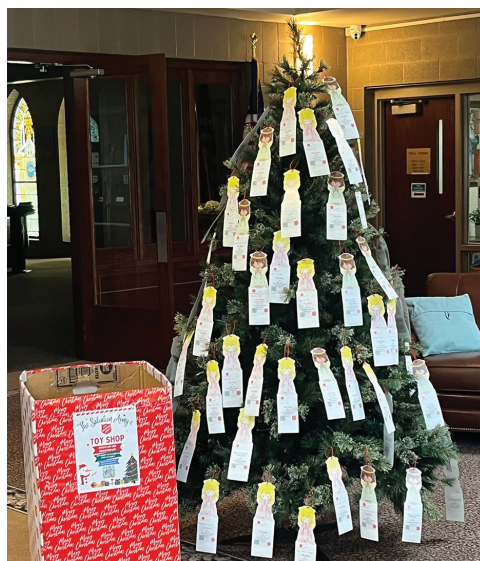
Coming up next is the **Angel Tree Project** coordinated through the Salvation Army. From November 22 – December 8th presents for children of all ages are requested to give to families in need at Christmas and this year the need is expected to be greater than ever. Please take an angel off the tree and purchase a gift for a child. Bring the unwrapped gift back and place it under the tree prior to December 8 so it can be delivered to the Salvation Army for distribution. They were short gifts last year, so we are hoping for a greater turnout this Advent season.

If you'd like to be involved in making a difference in the church and the community, please contact the Social Concerns Committee Chair, Mary Widiger at (218) 770-2435 to learn more. We'd love to have you join us!

REACHING OUT IN MANY WAYS

Our Lady of Victory Social Concerns Committee has been busy in many ways!

The Fall Coat Collection successfully gathered new and gently used coats in November. Thank



you to all who donated! The Fergus Falls Salvation Army requested this year that only new coats be received by them, so the gently used ones were given to area distribution and thrift stores to make sure they were well stocked for the cold weather.

The monthly pop-up food shelf, **Ruby's Pantry** run by the Church of the Nazorean, has been a community staple for stretching people's food budgets for years in Fergus Falls. There are no financial restrictions for receiving food, just a \$25 donation is requested, but can be waived in case of hardship. Up until a year ago, people had to have a vehicle to pick up the food shares. Starting last December, the OLV Social Concerns Committee began delivering food to area residents who did not have transportation or the ability to get their share.

New ACC Members

SHARON CUHEL

Sharon, a retired widow, previously attended St. James where she was an active member. She has 3 sons. We can welcome her most often at the 4:30 Mass when she's not 'snow-birding' in AZ.



ABEL & MARITZA VAZQUEZ

They have two sons and two daughters. Abel works construction and many already know Maritza as she is our ACC bookkeeper. OLV Welcomes the Vazquez family.



MICHAEL & AMANDA HEYDA WITH DAUGHTERS TRACY & MAGDALINA "MAGGIE"

When asked what brought you to OLV they responded they enjoy the music during Mass and the multiple ways to grow their faith. OLV welcomes this family from Tintah to our parish community!

WELCOME ALL!!



BEN ANDERSON

Ben and his wife, Kelsey are raising their 3 children on a hobby farm. Their oldest attends kindergarten at OLV School. OLV welcomes Ben and his family to our parish community!

MELANIE KLEIN

Melanie and her daughter, a 7th grader, have been active in their church in Wheaton prior to moving here. Our Lady of Victory welcomes the Klein family.



BRAYDEN & SHANNON KOCH

The Koch family went from 2 to 3 when they welcomed their son Alexander in July. mom works with

WEX Health and dad is with Viking Cola. Welcome to OLV!

RYAN & JAMIE LANOUE

Ryan and Jamie joined OLV so their two children could participate in faith formation as St. James no longer has it. OLV welcomes the Lanoue family!

MARK & COURTNEY TULS

Mark and Courtney love to spend time with their 3 children and traveling to new places is their favorite thing to do. Welcome to OLV!

Roast Beef Dinner at St. Leonard's Catholic Church



Nothing brings a community together more than comfort food. The sense of community was strong at St. Leonard's Catholic Church in Pelican Rapids on Wednesday, October 22. More than 350 meals were served to folks, not only from Pelican Rapids, but surrounding communities as well.

Chairs of event, Linda Klimek and Juliann Holt, said it takes a village to put on such a successful event. "We have such a wonderful group of volunteers that give their time and hearts to make things go smoothly," Klimek said. "Extra thanks goes out to Phil Stotesbery. He spends an enormous amount of time cooking and carving the roast beef. We really depend on him for a successful event."

"Everyone rolls up their sleeves, including our Priests," Klimek said. "They are right there with us clearing plates and doing dishes." Volunteers not only help serve and clean up but bake homemade pies leading up to the event.

Donations are also received for the silent auction, which brought in over \$1,100 this year.



Baptisms



TYLER GERARD RUEGEMER
Aaron & Megan Ruegemer
September 1, 2025



EMMA JEAN FRANCES
Brandon & Jade Soland
September 7, 2025



ALEXANDER JAMES
Brayden & Shannon Koch
September 20, 2025



GRACIE RITA CARBERT
Mitchell & Madison Carbert
8/16/2025



NASH NICOLAAS
Kevin & Mikayla Van Vuuren
September 21, 2025



COLTON WILLIAM
William & Sarah Harren
November 2, 2025



ELSIE JUNE OLSON
Aaron & Anyssa Olson
September 14, 2025

Upcoming Events



ACC

DEC 6 – Potluck following 4:30 pm Mass at OLV

DEC 8 – 6:30 pm Mass - Bishop Neary celebrates Mass at OLV. Reception following Mass. Everyone is invited.

DEC 14 – 3:00 pm Advent Penance Service at OLV

OLV

DEC 11 – Christmas School Program at 1:30 & 6:30

DEC 24 – 4:30 pm Christmas Eve Mass

DEC 25 – 9:30 am Christmas Day

JAN 1 – 9:30 am New Years/Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

ST. ELIZABETH

Dec 24 – 4:00 pm Christmas Eve Mass

ST. LEONARD

Dec 12 – 6:30 pm Mass - Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration – (Our Lady of All the America's) followed by a free will offering dinner and the raffle prize drawing. Raffle tickets are now on sale for \$2 apiece and are available at the St. Leonard and Our Lady of Victory offices.

Dec 15 – 6:30 pm Las Posadas begin

Dec 24 – 6:30 pm Christmas Eve Mass

Dec 25 – 10:30 am Christmas Day Mass

Dec 31 – 6:30 pm New Years/Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Mass

Life Long Parishioner James (Jim) Marty Celebrates 90th Birthday

By Julie Wilson



At 90 years old, our dad stands as a testament to faith, family, hard work and dedication. Born and raised in Minnesota other than a short stint in Washington state during World War II, dad spent his life as a farmer and as an electrician – two vocations that require both grit and grace. Beyond the fields and the wiring, dad's greatest legacy is the life he built with our mom, Janice. Together they cleared the land to make a home and farm just west of Pelican Rapids, MN and raised 10 kids with lots of love and planted the seeds of the Catholic faith in each one of us. Dad remembers when they moved the original St. Leonard's Catholic Church made of wood off of its foundation into the parking lot and helping to build the current church by hauling bricks in a wheelbarrow and doing any other small jobs he was asked to do. St. Leonard's is where our mom and dad were married on February 8, 1958, where all 10 of us kids were Baptized, received our First Communion and Confirmation and where five of us kids were married. Dad also served as an usher and was a 4th Degree Knight. Mom often talked about how early in their marriage, she could hear the clinking of dad's rosary beads against the bed frame as he prayed the rosary each night.

Dad worked tirelessly to provide for our family. Whether it was taking care of the animals, working the fields or going on electrical service calls, I never heard my dad

complain or say he was too busy. He always had his priorities in order – faith, family and friends. He and our mom shared a great social life always surrounded by family members, neighbors and friends and always had an open-door policy – everyone was welcome at the Marty farm and there was always room at our table.

Dad's hands were large and calloused from his years of hard work, but also gentle as he would hold our hands in church as we prayed the Our Father or how he held our hands as he would whisk us around the dance floor to a waltz or a polka. One of the highlights of the year would be to get to attend a polka mass each summer.

Even though dad was a devout member of the Catholic church, it wasn't just a Sunday event for him. He lived his faith daily as we would watch him go on service calls in the middle of the night and on holidays and often times in bad weather, always inviting anyone in for a meal, offering help to any friend, neigh-

bor or stranger in need and even though he didn't voice it when we were young, he shared later in life just how much he prayed for us kids.

Dad's life is like one of a true Christian – one of humility, service and love. He taught us that the faith isn't just something you profess, but it's something you live out every day in your daily life. In every field he planted, every service call he went on and in every kid he raised, he lived out his faith.

As we honor and celebrate our dad's 90th birthday, we are reminded of the mission he lived – to serve God, love of family and to help your community. Dad's life reminds us that holiness is found in the every day of the sweat of hard work, the laughter of loved ones around you and in the quiet moments of prayer. Thank you, Dad, for showing us what it means to live a life of faith, family and service.

Stewardship Commitment Renewal Update

For the last few weeks, we at Our Lady of Victory have been deepening our understanding of what it means to be a Christian steward and renewing our commitment to practice stewardship as a way of life. Preparation and implementation of our annual stewardship renewal depends on the dedicated work of many volunteers and the parish staff who share their time and their talent in the variety of tasks required as we continue along our stewardship journey.

As of this writing, 221 parishioners have discerned how they will share their talents with our church and parish community. Although we do an annual commitment renewal, stewardship has no set time or date to jump on board as discernment can occur anytime. Commitment cards can be mailed to the office, dropped off, or placed in the collection basket.

We are personally grateful for all efforts and contributions to this important enrichment of our parish life.

God's Blessings,
Stewardship Committee

WELCOME EMILY SCHMIDT

Emily Schmidt is a lifelong member of the Fergus Falls community who now calls rural Underwood her home. Emily is married to her husband, Jamie, and together they share a blended family that includes her 22-year-old son and two stepchildren, ages 17 and 15. They share their home with Nova, their 5-year-old yellow lab, three cats, and a lively flock of chickens.

Emily was born and raised in Fergus Falls and has deep roots here, cherishing the close-knit feel of the community. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, watching movies, attending local events, and appreciating the natural beauty of the lakes area.

One dream she hopes to fulfill someday is traveling to Europe — especially France, Italy, and Greece. Her connection to France



is especially meaningful: as a teenager, Emily's family hosted a French exchange student named Noémie, whom she still lovingly refers to as her "French sister."

Emily serves as Administrative Assistant and can be found in the OLV office. PVACC welcomes Emily!



ACC MONTHLY POTLUCKS - YUMMY FOODS AND GREAT FELLOWSHIP!

Beginning in October on the first Saturday of the month, Our Lady of Victory began hosting potluck suppers following Saturday's 4:30 Mass. Everyone who attended the first two can attest to the delicious foods and fellowship shared.

It is planned to have the potluck suppers on the 1st Saturday of each of the Minnesota winter months (October through April). Feel free to bring your favorite dish, salad, bread, or dessert to share. The next supper will be December 6th following 4:30 Mass. See you there!

PS: If you would like to help in the kitchen contact Rhonda Peterson.

REFLECTIONS OF AN OLD MAN

"We need a little Christmas..."

...right this very moment. Need a little Christmas now!" It seems to me that those words are as applicable today as they were when they were written. We always need the joy Christmas brings. To that end, I offer a few Christmas programs that never fail to lift my spirits.

Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol. There's more than humbug to this animated version of the Charles Dickens classic. Who can forget Scrooge's response when told that many would rather die than go to the poorhouse? "Then let them die and relieve the surplus population." Or the words of Marley's ghost when Scrooge tells him, "You were always a good man of business, Jacob." "Business?" Marley responds. "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business!" Or the scene when Bob Cratchit tells his family how Tiny Tim hoped that when people saw him they'd remember who made the blind to see and the lame to walk? And isn't Scrooge's joy when he realizes the meaning of Christmas almost as joyful as the season itself?

The Grinch Who Stole Christmas. Could they have picked a better voice than that of Boris Karloff (the movies' original Frankenstein's Monster, 1931) to narrate this Dr. Seuss classic? Could they have drawn a cuter, sweeter, more believable young person than Cindy Lou Who? And what a treat it is when the people down in Whoville, despite the missing presents, join hands to sing "Wahoo Vorhees, Christmas day is in our grasp as long as we have hands to clasp."

A Christmas Story. So popular is this one that Fox runs it continuously for 24 hours on Christmas Day. The family is as loving as the one I was part of (though three persons fewer), the era was the mid-forties (when I was growing up) and, just like Ralphy, I received a BB gun with Red Ryder burned into the stock. (Only mine didn't have "one of the things which tell time.")

It's a Wonderful Life. Don't we all feel better about our own lives when the Angel shows George that one needn't realize every dream to be worthwhile? That the important thing is to do our best at whatever we do, always keeping in mind the welfare of others.

A Charlie Brown Christmas. "I don't think it's such a bad little tree," says Charlie. And indeed, when trimmed with love, it isn't! But it's at the end when we get the perfect finale. It's when Linus, standing in the spotlight and clutching his blanket, begins to recite—from memory—the most beautiful, poetic, meaningful Christmas story of all: "And there were in that country, shepherds tending their flocks by night,..."

Merry Christmas! God bless us, everyone! And don't forget Frosty, Rudolph, Amahl, the Little Drummer Boy, and all your favorites!

PS: Wouldn't a steaming helping of raspberry dressing taste good right now?

Lee Krogh

Our Lady of Victory School

It's been a wonderful start to the school year at Our Lady of Victory School! This fall, OLV is home to 103 students in Kindergarten through sixth grade and 35 students in preschool. Our hallways are filled with energy, learning, and faith as students and teachers work together to grow in both knowledge and virtue.

One highlight of the season was our annual OLV School Marathon, held on October 10. Students walked, ran, and biked their way to raise an incredible \$15,667.25! The event brought together families, parishioners, and community members in support of Catholic education. We are so grateful to everyone who donated, volunteered, and cheered our students on throughout the afternoon.

Students are now turning their attention to music as they prepare songs for the upcoming Christmas Program on December 11. The program is always a cherished tradition at OLV, bringing together families and friends to celebrate the joy of the season through song and fellowship.

Our Lady of Victory School continues to be a place where faith and learning thrive. We are blessed by the continued support of our parish and community as we live out our mission of guiding students toward academic excellence and a life rooted in Christ.



ANOTHER FUN TURKEY



St. Elizabeth hosted over 140 people for a delicious home cooked turkey dinner at their annual 'Turkey Bingo' November 15th. The room was filled with the joyful noise of laughter, people visiting, the sound of dishes being picked up, and excitement as bingo numbers were called. The quietest time was during anticipation when listening to the rattle of the bingo cage turning.

We are grateful for the support this event receives as the proceeds are donated to the Food Shelf.

Be sure to put this event on your calendar for next year!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

PELICAN VALLEY AREA CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Our Lady of Victory, St. Elizabeth, St. Leonard

C/O 207 North Vine Street
Fergus Falls, MN 56537



WEEKEND MASSES

Saturday 4:30 pm Our Lady of Victory
Sunday 8:30 am St. Elizabeth
Sunday 8:30 am Our Lady of Victory
Sunday 10:30 am Our Lady of Victory
Sunday 10:30 am St. Leonard
Sunday 12:00 pm St. Leonard Spanish Mass

Our Lady of Victory School
(K-6th grade)
Learning Ladder Preschool
(3-5 year olds, full
and half day)
218/736-6661
www.ffolvschool.org

Advent Calendar

Monday, Dec. 8 at 6:30 p.m.

ACC EUCHARIST WITH BISHOP NEARY FOR THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (bilingual Mass at Our Lady of Victory, including a blessing of our renewed worship space followed by a reception and light meal).
ALL ARE INVITED!

Thursday, Dec. 11 at 1:30 and 6:30 p.m.

OLV SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM at Our Lady of Victory Church.

Friday, Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m. at St. Leonard

MASS AND CELEBRATION FOR THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Sunday, December 14 at 3:00 p.m. at Our Lady of Victory

ACC ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE Several extra priests will be available to hear confessions.

Christmas Masses

Christmas Eve:

4:00 p.m. St. Elizabeth
4:30 p.m. OLV
6:30 p.m. St. Leonard

Christmas Day:

9:30 a.m. OLV
10:30 a.m. St. Leonard

New Years/Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God:

6:30 p.m. (New Years Eve) St. Leonard
9:30 a.m. (New Years Day) OLV

