

THE JOURNEY

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

Photo Credit
David Swenson

February
2026



Dear parishioners of our ACC

When Bishop Patrick Neary celebrated the December 8 Immaculate Conception Holy Day and reopening of Our Lady of Victory Church, he made remarks similar to these in his homily: "When we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ at this altar, we become a temple. We become a Tabernacle of His presence. When we receive communion, we need to take Jesus Christ from here to everyone we meet - especially those who do not know Jesus Christ. If just one person meets Jesus Christ because you are here, then your life will have had great meaning."



We all know that there are constant opportunities in our ACC and beyond to live out these words! Whenever we fulfill Christ's commands to love, to serve, to feed the hungry, announce favor to the oppressed... we are bringing, and in fact being, that Christ to those persons and the world. Thanks to all who live deeply their identity in Christ by showing concern and care however and whenever they can, often expanding their "family circle" to include many others, such as newcomers in the community, immigrants, those living with any kind of illness, fear or anxiety with uncertain circumstances. Let us remain united in faith and love!

Father Alan



The Immaculate Mary Celebration at OLV Dec. 8, 2025, with Bishop Patrick Neary



All the ends of the earth, sing a joyful song.

Sing to the Lord, there is salvation.

*Sing a new song to the Lord,
our God,*

*for He has worked wonders
near and far.*

*Our God's right hand and His
holy arm have brought salvation to
the world.*

And the first wonder of which this psalm speaks, the precious work God created to anticipate the glory that awaits us, is Mary, pure and spotless: the Immaculate Conception, the first fruit of redemption and the dawn of salvation.

We give thanks to our Bishop Patrick for presiding over the Holy Mass for the ACC.

We are grateful for his closeness, his words, and his invitation to keep in our prayers the people of Nicaragua and the Church that is on pilgrimage in those lands.

We also remember the United States; a nation Mary never aban-

dons and always protects.

Today the Bishop invited us to renew our "yes," to welcome, like Mary, the angel's message and the mission Jesus entrusts to each of us. This call resonates especially with those who have come from other countries, reminding us that wherever we are, we must never forget Jesus.

In the spirit of the All-Things New project, we are called to start anew, and with the docile heart of the Virgin we say once more: Be it done unto me according to your word.

Thank you, Bishop, for your prayers, for your ministry, and for your generous service to the People of God.

And thank you also to all those involved in every aspect of this celebration: those who prepared, organized, served, and offered their time with faith and dedication.

At the end, we ask joyfully:
Who brings such joy?
The Conception of Mary.

Night falls and solemnity comes to an end, but the Conception of Mary never disappears. She remains, watching over her peoples, protecting her children, and always guiding us to her Son, Jesus Christ.

Addendum: The image of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, which was brought from Nicaragua especially for the Mass celebrated by Bishop Patrick was carved in the city of León, Nicaragua, in wood, following the style of Spanish religious images known as *dressed statues*, which were introduced to Latin America during the time of the conquest.

This image was inspired by the Immaculate Conception, patroness of Nicaragua, which belonged to Saint Teresa of Ávila and is venerated in her basilica in El Viejo, Chinandega.

Its robe was hand-embroidered by artisans from Masaya and includes the coat of arms of Bishop Patricio, the monogram of Mary (an "M"), and the phrase *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, which means "Under your protection." This is the prayer that Christians have recited since the beginnings of Christianity, and the robe also features floral motifs.

The crown worn by the image contains twelve stars, representing the prophecy from the Book of Revelation: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head.



New ACC Members

JEANNE MARTY

Welcome to St. Elizabeth!



NATHAN & MOLLY MAHLER FAMILY

Nathan & Molly Mahler and their children: Emeric, Roxton, Jenson, and Colson. St. Elizabeth welcomes the Mahler family!



NICOLE & NATALIE JOHNSON

Nicole works in the mental health field and is a member of the ACC Mental Health Awareness Team. Nicole is currently in OCIA. Natalie was baptized at OLV December 13th. They both enjoy outdoor activities and living in Elizabeth. Welcome to St. Elizabeth!

JORDAN HERNANDEZ

Jordan had been searching for a church for her and her son to call home and 'God pointed her towards Catholicism'. OLV welcomes them to our faith community!



CHERYL HOFF

She and Tom, her husband, retired, downsized, and moved into their cabin in the Ashby area. "We have felt most at home at OLV and decided to become a member." OLV Welcomes Cheryl and Tom.



DAVID & DEBRA BYER

David and his wife are enjoying lake life, having retired and moved from the Fargo area. He was one of the original first 100 members of Saints Ann & Joachim in south Fargo. Welcome to Our Lady Of Victory!

Baptisms

ST. ELIZABETH:



LEIGHTON LYNN BAUER

Luke & Autumn Bauer
October 19, 2025

OLV:



HAYNES JAMES THOMAS RUDLANG

Zachary & Julianna Rudlang
December 14, 2025



DANIEL A. LAINE

Bain & Jasmine Laine
October 12, 2025



KARSON FAYE KOSAK

Kyle & Kelsey Kosack
January 4, 2026



HAPPY
VALENTINE'S
DAY!

UPCOMING EVENTS



FEBRUARY 5

**OLV School Preschool & Kindergarten
Open House** 5:30 – 7pm

FEBRUARY 7

1st Saturday Potluck at
OLV following 4:30 Mass

FEBRUARY 12

Giving Hearts Day – OLV School

FEBRUARY 15

KC Pancake Breakfast - OLV

FEBRUARY 18

Ash Wednesday

FEBRUARY 27

Fish Fry at OLV

MARCH 7

1st Saturday Potluck at
OLV following 4:30 Mass

MARCH 6, 13, 20, 26

Fish Fries at OLV

MARCH 26

Revive Retreat at OLV

MARCH 28

Welcome of OCIA Candidates and Catechumens

APRIL 11

OLV School Spring Gala



**Our Lady of Guadalupe
pray for us.**



**St. Leonard December 12th
Celebration of Our Lady**

"Personal connections are in many ways the fabric that has strengthened our local Church throughout these past years(136 for OLV, 154 for St. Elizabeth, and 126 for St. Leonard). I continue to hear about the importance of such relationships from those involved in parish small groups. Praise God! As we come to know each other better, we see our similarities, recognize our differences and come to see what we share by virtue of our baptism. By God's grace, we come to see Christ in each other."

**Quote from
Archbishop Bernard Hebda
Of the Archdiocese of
Saint Paul and Minneapolis**

Holiday Expo

Have you tried the goodies the ladies of St. Elizabeth make? Cakes, lefse, cookies, bars, donuts, breads, jams, dried fruit slices – if you can name it – they can make it! They again shared their culinary skills at the annual November Bake Sale and Holiday Expo.

As you can see in the pictures, the Expo draws in many creative vendors who fill Brenny Hall with a wide range of potential Christmas gifts for self or others. In addition to the fellowship shared, the parish benefits financially from this fundraiser. St. Elizabeth is grateful to everyone who helps make this day a successful and fun event.



Catholic Schools Week Reflection

By Jake Rath and shared at OLV Masses January 24th and 25th

This week, we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, a time when we give thanks for the gift of Catholic education and reflect on the theme "United in Faith and Community." This theme feels especially meaningful for us this year.

One year ago, our parish and school experienced a moment that could have easily shaken us to our core. The fire that damaged our church and school building brought uncertainty, disruption, and plenty of questions about what the future would hold. For a time, our classrooms were scattered, routines were changed, and the comfort of familiar spaces was gone.

But what the fire could not damage—what it could not touch—was our faith and our community.

In today's Gospel from Matthew, we hear that after John the Baptist is arrested, Jesus begins His public ministry in a place described as "darkness." And it is there, in that moment, that Matthew proclaims: "The people who sit in darkness have seen a great

light." Jesus begins calling His disciples not in a time of comfort, but in a moment of challenge. He calls ordinary people—fishermen—to follow Him, to trust Him, and to become part of something greater than themselves.

That Gospel mirrors our own story.

When the fire happened, it would have been easy to focus only on what was lost. But instead, something beautiful emerged. Families stepped up. Staff adapted with grace. Parishioners offered prayers, support, and encouragement. Others in the community opened their doors to us. In the midst of disruption, we experienced light—light in the form of generosity, resilience, and unwavering faith.

Our school continued not because of a building, but because of a shared mission: to form young people in faith, knowledge, and service. Our students continued to learn, to pray, to grow, and to serve—living witnesses to what it

means to be united in faith and community.

Catholic education is not just about academics, though excellence matters. It is about forming disciples. It is about helping our children hear the same invitation Jesus offered in today's Gospel: "Come, follow me." And we do that best when we walk together—families, parish, school—supporting one another through both joyful seasons and difficult ones.

As we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, we give thanks not only for where we are today, but for how God has carried us through the past year. We are reminded that even in moments of darkness, Christ is present, calling us forward, uniting us, and reminding us that the light of faith shines brightest when it is shared.

Thank you for your continued prayers, support, and belief in our school. Together, as a parish and a school family, we truly are united in faith and community.

Catholic Bishop Comes to Otter Tail Co.

By Tom Hintgen

Bishop Patrick Neary presided during a bilingual Mass with Spanish Monday evening, Dec. 8, at Our Lady of Victory Church, Fergus Falls. OLV is part of the Area Catholic Community which also includes Pelican Rapids and Elizabeth. The bishop, who heads the St. Cloud Diocese, also had a blessing for the refurbished OLV church following a fire in early 2025.

On Dec. 15, 2022, Pope Francis appointed him to be the 10th bishop of the Diocese of Saint Cloud. He was formally installed Feb. 14, 2023. He previously served as pastor of Holy Redeemer Parish in Portland, Oregon.

While speaking Dec. 8 to mem-

bers of the Area Catholic Community in Fergus Falls, Bishop Patrick said, "Have generous hearts to serve your neighbors."

A few days earlier, on Dec. 2, Bishop Patrick was appointed as chairperson of the Catholic Relief Services Board of Directors. He succeeds Archbishop Nelson Perez of Philadelphia.

"My years in Africa and in parish ministry have shown me the face of Christ in the poor and the vulnerable," Bishop Patrick said. "I carry those encounters with me into this role with Catholic Relief Services."

Bishop Neary is a native of La Porte, Indiana, and later graduat-



Bishop Patrick Neary

ed from Notre Dame in 1985. He spent a semester in Mexico City where he learned Spanish. He attended the Jesuit School of Theology in northern California and continued seminary studies in

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FAITHFUL SERVANTS

By Mary McGovern



Role model: (noun)
A person looked to by others as an example to be imitated.

This defines Matthew and Lucas Tuel. One generally thinks of role models as being adults, possibly in some position of authority, but Matthew and Lucas are young men that truly set a wonderful example with their commitment to service at Our Lady of Victory. Both of them attended OLV School as young people. They learned to be altar servers there and spent time using that gift to serve at Mass.

- Can you picture a young teen sitting motionless for 20 minutes in front of church as part of the live Holy Thursday Last Supper reenactment? Matthew did!
- Do you think a 9th grade boy would join his mom to help out with the 10:30 Mass Children's Liturgy? Lucas does!

These two young men are currently manning the audiovisual projection of the Mass. Matthew is helping Lucas learn the system and then passing the torch to him

as he leaves for college next year at the University of Minnesota, Morris. Lucas mentioned that he enjoys running the projector, as it helps him learn and understand the parts of the Mass in a deeper way. Matthew helps with the Middle School Faith Formation, as it is his goal to become a secondary education teacher some day. A few years ago, their parents, Pat and Rachel Tuel, gave their testimony from the ambo on Stewardship Sunday. Matthew and Lucas also spoke about their feelings of participating in the Mass. It takes courage for young people to speak

about their faith—role models!

In addition to their involvement at OLV, the boys are multi-sport athletes at Kennedy Secondary School. Both are on the swim team and the soccer team. They have been in track, cross-country and golf. Both are in choir; Matthew is also in orchestra and Lucas in band. Matthew was elected to the National Honor Society last year. They are great examples of the education they received as OLV students.

When asked about their service, the boys commented that they enjoy helping out and doing their part. They are using the gifts and talents that God gave them and are wonderful role models of young and faithful servants!

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TEAM

By Deb Forstner



When Bishop Patrick Neary introduced himself in writing to parishioners of his new diocese, he chose to be open in sharing about the experience of one of his grandfathers with mental illness. He noted that mental health would be a priority of his episcopate. Under his direction, a Diocesan Mental Health Ministry team was formed, guided by the National Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministries. Bringing my interest and background as a school psychologist and chaplain, with focused research and experience with spirituality and mental health, I volunteered for the diocese team approximately two years ago. A goal of the diocese team was that Area Catholic Communities would form their own processes to ad-



dress mental health. I am happy to report that the Pelican Valley Area Catholic Community has the first formal beginning of our own team.

At our first meeting in September 2025, the group chose to call ourselves the "Mental Health Awareness Team." Our brainstormed purposes include education, promotion of resources, letting people know they are not alone (reducing stigma), and sponsoring events and speakers. Thus far, our team helped in carrying out a Mass for Suicide Prevention, Remembrance, and Healing, shared a novena for mental health along with other community resources, and included a December bulletin insert about stress/grief at the holi-

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Children help make Christmas so special!



Pre-School at OLV



Part of the OLV students in the Christmas Program



St. Elizabeth Children's Program at Mass on the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Catholic Bishop Comes to Otter Tail Co.

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Santiago, Chile, where he practiced his Spanish.

In 1991 he was ordained a priest of the Congregation of the Holy Cross which reside at Notre Dame. Neary worked in administration and spiritual guidance at Notre Dame and later was assigned to administration duties in Vatican City where he served from 2002 to 2010.

He was assigned to administrative duties at a seminary in Kenya and subsequently as an administra-

tor in Uganda in east Africa. Then it was on to Portland, Oregon, in 2018, serving as pastor of Holy Redeemer parish, until becoming a bishop and moving to Minnesota in 2022.

The Diocese of St. Cloud includes 131 parishes spread across 16 counties, including Otter Tail County, in central and western Minnesota. The diocese has a population of close to 125,000 people.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TEAM

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days. Be on the lookout for "Mental Health Minutes," which will be in the Pelican Valley section of our ACC bulletins.

We are grateful to all who choose to be open in discussing mental health, as experienced in self, family, or with friends. As one of our team members shared, "If you have a brain, you have mental health." Fr. Alan and Fr. Lucho are both members of our awareness team, and their support in our team's endeavors is extremely valuable.

**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

REFLECTIONS OF AN OLD MAN

The Miracle of Now!

Those of you familiar with the beautiful, song-filled animated "Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol" will recognize the title line of this "Reflection" as the last line of a song rendered at the Christmas table by the cash-poor but love-rich Bob Cratchit, the last verse of which is:

We can't afford a Christmas tree, we will someday, I vow.
Start smiling and enjoy with me, the *miracle* of now!

No. The old boy hasn't lost it. I know Christmas was nearly two months ago. But that last line has been on my mind for weeks. Yes, I know Bob was referring to the miracle of Christmas, the day on which God sent His son, born of a Virgin, to redeem us. And, together with the day of His rising from the dead, there is no other miracle as great.

And yet, the more I thought about it the more I began to think, "*When you come right down to it, aren't all days—even the bad ones—miracles?*" Not as great, of course, as the two I just mentioned, but miracles nonetheless?

Yes, there are those who would say that the world's most powerful telescopes, looking back billions of years at an innumerable number of moons, suns, planets, galaxies, black holes, constellations, nebulae (whatever they are) and other amazing celestial objects make our brief, tiny lives on this small planet insignificant.

Insignificant? I disagree. Can the moon see its beauty reflected on the lake at night? I can! Can the sun appreciate its reflection on the dewy grass while standing with a buddy on the first tee at 6:30 in the morning? I have! Can a black hole, no matter how powerful, decide whether to bemoan the few objects it has failed to pull in or be grateful for the things it has consumed? I can! Can a planet (say Mars) promise another planet (say Venus) to love her forever, and keep that promise? I can and I have!

Not only that, but I've been given the power to make my own choices. Make the right ones (you know what they are as well as I) and I can join the billions of my sisters and brothers in being welcomed into what Jesus referred to as "The Kingdom prepared from the beginning of the world." As for those magnificent objects scattered across a magnificent universe, I'll continue to marvel at their existence. But I'll remember that Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." Those words are good enough for me!

So, I'll continue to enjoy the miracle of now, which includes both appreciating all the beauty of the world and making the right choices as long as I have the ability to do so. I know it won't be easy. I fail daily, in one way or another, to live up to being the kind of person I want to be. But I'll keep trying, knowing what the "final answer" will be if I succeed.

After all, isn't that why I'm here?

Lee Krogh