THE JOURNEY

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



Lay Witness talk by Anthony and Emily Rooney



Hi all - for those who we have not had the pleasure of meeting, my name is Anthony Rooney and this is my wife Emily Rooney. We're also blessed with four wonderful children.

We were asked to speak today on the role of stewardship in the church and in our personal lives.

Both of our stewardship journeys started out at a young age. Although we may not have been familiar with the term "stewardship" at the time, we were both fortunate to grow up with parents who valued and modeled stewardship. We watched them serve as lectors and Eucharistic ministers, tithe, and spend their time in volunteer and leadership roles within the parish. We were also encouraged as children to give our time to the church as altar servers, help out with parish dinners, and to give financially from what we had.

From a practical standpoint, the fruit of this stewardship appears straightforward - without the financial support of parishioners or the time and talents offered by its members, it would be very difficult for the church to consistently celebrate mass, administer the sacraments, and serve the needs of our broader community.

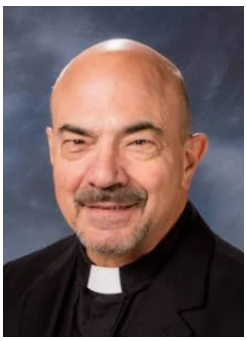
However, as our individual journeys with stewardship matured beyond our initial understandings, we began to find that our giving, volunteering, and the surrendering of our talents to the Lord was doing more than just helping the parish and its ministries run smoothly - it was truly changing our interior lives and drawing us nearer to Jesus (and we aren't just talking about the "warm fuzzy feeling" or consolation that sometimes comes with helping others). In fact, the times when it was more challenging or difficult to give or surrender were the times of greater gain - practicing stewardship even when it is hard has been a consistent source of help in our ongoing journey of letting go of worldly attachments and opening ourselves more fully to God's grace and presence in our lives. Through stewardship, we continue to learn and relearn that everything we have has been given as a gift to us by God and that God's plan to use these gifts is always better than anything we could imagine.

Even in the face of these blessings, challenges exist. To begin, it can be difficult to know and discern where our talents and energies are best spent. Sometimes the circumstances of our lives give us obvious avenues, other times they may close certain doors - responsibilities for small children at home may prohibit volunteering at certain times and the loss of a job or an unexpected expense may limit the ability for financial contributions. And yet, we are often reminded that the Lord can use even our smallest offerings to do great things just as he multiplied the loaves and fish. By maintaining an openness to the Lord in prayer we can be alert and attentive to the ways that he wishes to guide us and help us to be faithful stewards in all of our seasons and ups and downs.

Fortunately, our parish has many wonderful opportunities to participate in stewardship by serving in the liturgy, volunteering with parish ministries, and tithing. One opportunity that has been dear to us and illustrates the fruit of stewardship has been marriage preparation for engaged couples. From a practical standpoint, engaged couples are required to complete a course with a married mentor couple in order to be married within the diocese. As our parish is always looking for more volunteers and this is a ministry that we felt was placed on our hearts, we were excited to help. During the course, we often meet with couples over several sessions spanning a course of weeks to months. Despite our enthusiasm for the ministry, there were challenges - sometimes we would start a session still reeling after a long day, other times we would have to manage a stray toddler who wasn't quite ready to go to bed or overcome doubts that we would have the advice or wisdom that a particular couple needed. But despite these obstacles, the Holy Spirit always provided and we would come away with the joy and privilege of accompanying another couple on the journey to marriage while also being renewed interiorly within our own marriage as we together were reminded of the graces of the sacrament.

As we continue on our stewardship journey, we continue to pray and discern new or continuing ways to serve, and we would ask you to do the same. Thank you all for everything you do to enrich our wonderful parish community and grow in holiness together.

Message from Fr. Michael Troha



Fr. Michael Troha, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Willoughby, Ohio, who was a retreat speaker at OLV in 2016, passed unexpectedly January 3, 2026. He spoke on the Spirituality of Stewardship. His writing below is timely as we approach Commitment Renewal weekend.

Is Your Parish a Family or a Gas Station?

Several years ago, while serving in the Diocese of Cleveland's missions in El Salvador, we celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation with the auxiliary bishop of the diocese. One of the missionaries asked him, "How do the people here look at the Church?" He replied, "They look upon the Church either as a ladder or as their mother." In other words, some look upon the Church as a means to get something; others look upon the church as a personal relationship.

We all could ask the same question about our own parish. How do you look upon the parish? I might offer the response that we look upon the parish in a similar way that the Salvadorans look upon the Church. Some look upon the parish as if it is a gas station; others look upon the parish as a family — a place to form a personal relationship with Christ. In which category do you fit? If you look upon your parish as a gas station, it means that you use the parish primarily to fulfill your personal needs. If the Mass times are convenient for you, and if the religious education and sacramental preparation is to your liking, then you come to this parish. If these things aren't to your liking, then you go elsewhere to have your needs fulfilled.

If you look upon the parish as a family — a place to form personal relationships, especially with Jesus Christ, then you make a commitment to the whole parish to take part in parish life to its fullest — to receive and to give. That is the difference. You don't go looking for cheaper gas prices in order to get what you want. You look at the needs of the parish and say, "How can I help make this parish more welcoming, more prayerful, more serving and more loving?"

The best way that I know to accomplish all of this is by making a strong commitment to stewardship as a way of life. The celebration of the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of the parish family, our Christian life. The commitment of time is primarily to the weekly celebration of the Eucharist. The commitment of our talents means that we share our gifts with others by being involved in parish ministries. We make a financial commitment of our treasure because we are born with a need to cheerfully give back to God from all of the many blessings, financial and otherwise, that He has given us.

A stewardship way of life is our response to God's call to us to become like Him. This means that we become a generously giving person from all that God has given us.

Answering the Call to Serve



Recently, I was elected by the members of the Priest Retirement Board for the Diocese of Cleveland to be the chairman of this group for the next two years. I didn't want to be chairman of the board. In fact, at the last meeting, when it was time to make nominations, I quickly nominated someone else so that I would not be chosen. However, the other priest refused the nomination and then quickly nominated me instead. No one else would even accept a nomination.

I, too, wanted to refuse. But before the meeting began, I was conversing with the other priests, and we all shared an opinion that, in our parishes, we have people willing to volunteer, but very few who are willing to accept leadership positions within parish ministries. How could I criticize others for doing something that I myself am guilty of? So that is how I got elected.

At my parish, Immaculate Conception in Willoughby, Ohio, we are in our sixth year of living stewardship as a way of life. Even before we started on our path of stewardship, we have always had generous parishioners who truly love our parish and who come forward to serve in parish groups and ministries. Our Annual Stewardship Renewal each October provides us with a convenient way to showcase the various ministries of our parish, to encourage people to use their gifts and talents in a particular ministry, and to allow parishioners to make a one-year commitment to a ministry.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of living stewardship as a parish is that we have had over 200 parishioners who previously were not involved in any parish ministry come forward and get involved in sharing their talents. At Immaculate Conception, we have seen several new ministries get a good start, like the Society of Mother Teresa, Wellness Ministry, the Prayer Shawl Ministry, the Hospitality Committee, Mass Greeters, Building Church Welcoming All, the Parish Beautification Team, the Transportation Ministry, and others. Parishioners continue to support the liturgical and catechetical ministries. Stewardship has made this possible at Immaculate Conception and it can happen at your parish, too.

But at my parish and yours, we also all need parishioners to accept positions of leadership within the ministries of the parish. Sometimes, we feel over-extended in our church and civic involvements. Others, perhaps, don't know where they could fit in leading a ministry while driving children to sports practices and other commitments. Still, others don't want the burden of suffering the criticism and gossip that comes with being a leader.

So, as I prepare to chair my first meeting of the Retirement Board in August, join me in praying that leaders will come forth from our parish (and yours) to generously answer the call to serve.

Baptisms

CHARLOTTE JANE
Brooks & Emily Toso
August 16th at OLV





MATTHEW NATANAEL LOPEZ BUSTILLO
Walmaro Lopez & Kenia Bustillo

AIDAN RODNEY
Derek & Molly Ambrosie
Aug 30 at OLV



WAYNE SZALAI
James & Valentina Haberman
August 8th at St. Leonard



ASHER JACK
Dillon & Lauren Cole
Sept 5th at St. Elizabeth

MIA FRANCO
Ivan & Susana Franco
St. Leonard



LIAM EMILIAM BAUTISTA FUENTES
Jamie Bautista & Scarleth Fuentes at St. Leonard

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 4 Commitment Renewal at OLV
Oct 21 Roast Beef Dinner at St. Leonard
Oct 22 Revive at OLV
Nov 2 Bible Study at OLV
Please register by Oct. 9th so materials can be ordered.
Nov 14 Turkey Bingo at St. Elizabeth
Nov 21 Holiday Expo at St. Elizabeth
Dec 12 Guadalupe Festival at St. Leonard

New ACC Members

Welcome to our parish family! We look forward to getting to know you and we invite you to become involved as we have many opportunities available.



JIM & JANE RUDLANG
Jim and Jane Rudlang are retired have enjoyed being active members of their community. "We moved from West Fargo to downsize and be closer to our son and family. OLV has been a very friendly church to attend and be a part of."



JENNIFER ZEINNER
Jennifer Zeinner moved here from the Sioux City area a couple of years ago. She is a former RN who now takes care of her mother. She is also an artist.

JONATHON & HANNAH NUYTTEN
They have three children, Thomas age 11, Ariella age 9, and Natalia age 7.

Welcome!

ST. LEONARD PARISH





On Wednesday September 9th, the Most Reverend Mons. Angel Ernesto Zapata Bances, Bishop of Chimbote, Peru, presided over a Solem Mass offered for our local church and for the All Things New initiative.

In his homily, the Bishop expressed his desire to encourage us in faith and hope. He reminded us that the church is truly universal, and that when we are united in faith, we experience the universality of the church in a profound way.

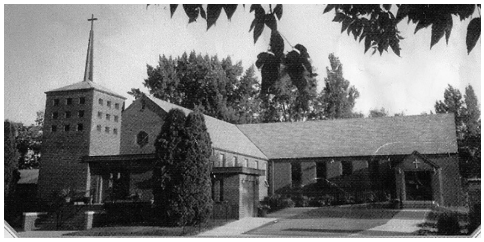
He encouraged us to listen with our hearts, to see with the eyes of faith, and to love one another. In the midst of the changes and challenges we are experiencing as a local church, we are called to remain united, to trust in God, and to walk together in faith and hope.

May this beautiful celebration continue to strengthen us as one church, united in Christ.

A special thank you to our choirs, lectors, deacons, alter servers, the Knights of Columbus, and to Kefe con Dios for providing the photographs and livestream, helping us to share this beautiful celebration with those who could not be present.

Peace and all good.

St. Leonard Celebrates 72 Years



This year, the St. Leonard community celebrated the 72nd anniversary of the dedication of our church. It was a special opportunity to look back on the history of our parish and give thanks for the many generations who have called St. Leonard their spiritual home.

Our church was dedicated on August 25, 1954. Since that day, it has been a place where our community has gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, welcome new members through Baptism, celebrate marriages, pray for our loved ones, and come together in faith.

For 72 years, these walls have witnessed countless moments in the life of our parish. As we celebrate this anniversary, we remember with gratitude all those who came before us and helped build the parish we have today.

St. Leonard Begins Preparations for the Guadalupe Festival

The St. Leonard community has begun preparing for this year's Guadalupe Festival, which will take place on December 12.

The festival will be a special celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe and an opportunity for our parish community to come together in faith, culture, and fellowship. Preparations are already underway, and we look forward to celebrating this beautiful tradition together.

More details about the celebration and the activities planned for the day will be shared as we get closer to the event.

Steubenville Retreat: A Time of Grace for Our Youth

The Steubenville Retreat was once again a great success this year. Around 18 young people from our parish had the opportunity to participate in this special weekend of faith, fellowship, and encounter with Christ.

The Sunday following the retreat, one of our young people, Maury Chavez, shared his testimony with the parish community. Maury spoke about how Jesus opens our hearts and reminded us not to be afraid to let Him work in our lives.

He shared that he went to the retreat expecting one thing but instead received a great surprise from God. His experience was a beautiful reminder that when we open our hearts to Jesus and allow Him to lead us, He can touch our lives in ways we may never expect.

We are grateful for the opportunity our young people have to experience their faith in such a meaningful way, and we pray that what they received at Steubenville will continue to grow in their hearts.

YTM Retreat at St. John's University

Four young people from our parish also had the opportunity to attend a nine-day YTM retreat at St. John's University. During the camp, they spent time studying theology, growing deeper in their faith, and discovering new ways to pray and connect with God.

It was a wonderful opportunity for them to learn, reflect, and share their faith with other young people. We are grateful for their willingness to take part in this experience and pray that what they learned will continue to strengthen their relationship with Christ and inspire them in their daily lives.



Steubenville



YTM Retreat at St. John's University

FAITHFUL SERVANTS

By Mary McGovern

"There are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord."
Corinthians 12:2

There is a wide variety of ways to serve, and Joe and Nancy Hilber embody many of them. Joe has been the Deacon at St. Leonard Church in Pelican Rapids for many years, and Nancy is the director of the English-speaking choir. How they got there is an interesting story! When Joe was a senior in high school in Grand Forks, his parents moved to a new community. Joe wished to finish his senior year in Grand Forks so was invited to move into the rectory and live with the parish priests. He became friends with the Associate Pastor, who even let him borrow his car to go to work after school! He spent his summers working on a ranch in SE North Dakota. When Joe was a student at NDSU and Nancy was "marking time" there, a friend convinced him to try out for a part in a play, and as he did, that's where he met Nancy! They married in 1960 and now have three grown children. They began their religious life together at the St. Paul Cathedral. Nancy belonged to the Presbyterian Church at that time, but the beauty of the Cathedral and the Gregorian Chant that was part of Mass there, drew her in. They had planned to raise their children as Catholics, so it made sense for Nancy to become Catholic herself.

A job change brought Joe and Nancy first to Grand Forks, ND, then to Sioux City, IA. The Second Vatican Council Mass changes had just been implemented, and Joe hosted a couples' discussion group to enable a deeper understanding of the new directives. Next, on to Kansas City, where Joe became more deeply involved in the church as Religious Education Director.

Later after moving to New Jersey, Joe and Nancy became interested in doing what they could to be involved in the large local parish. At that point, Joe had a friend that was studying



for the Diaconate, and he convinced Joe to join him in his studies, so he became a Deacon while living in New Jersey.

Joe's deep faith was passed down from his parents, although he "overthrew" it for a while, and credits Nancy for helping him to return. His father was a passionate golfer and had the creativity and drive to build Lida Greens, a 9-hole golf course near Pelican Rapids. As time went on, Joe and Nancy made some course improvements and restored and expanded the pro shop in the large barn on the property. Their son, David, increased the course to 14 holes and is now the manager.

Nancy loves her calling as choir director and has the God-given gift of being able to play the piano and guitar by ear! She also schedules the lectors and enjoys helping where needed. St. Leonard is home to her, and she loves her friendship with the choir members, both the English and Spanish congregants, and Father Alan and Father Lucho as well. Joe has baptized over 100 people and feels honored to serve at many funerals and graveside services. He also loved presiding at many family weddings. He is considered to be the patriarch of his extended family. Joe especially loves the pelican in the stained-glass window at St. Leonard, which represents how Jesus shed His blood for humanity, and has given many homilies explaining the symbolism.

There are many roads that lead to a common outcome, and we are so thankful that the Hilbers' path led them to St. Leonard! They have been, and continue to be, Faithful Servants in so many ways!

A Day to Remember – 9/11/2001

Those of us of a certain age will always remember where we were on September 11, 2001, when the twin towers of the World Trade Center fell. OLV students colored 2,977 American flags in honor of each of the persons who lost their lives on that tragic day. At 10AM on 9/11/26, students, teachers, parents and friends gathered on the grassy lawn next to OLV School in remembrance of this day and it's events. The flags were fluttering in the breeze as the color guard marched in to face the very respectful groups of students. There was a hush as Jake Raths and DJ Robbins each spoke. Father Alan said a prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a haunting rendition of Taps was played. The firemen, fire trucks and police added solemnity to the morning. What a great way to bring history to life for these young people!





OLV KCs success tied to leadership

By Tom Hintgen



Members of OLV Knights of Columbus Council 3118 will tell you that success in keeping a KC council alive and well comes from leadership. That's certainly true in 2026, and examples are Grand Knight Gary Fults and Financial Secretary Rick Fiedler.

Fults is the council leader when it comes to planning, with the help of fellow knights, for KC pancake feeds which benefit members of Our Lady of Victory and many charitable organizations.

He presides over KC monthly meetings, ensures that those meetings start on time, has an agenda in place and distributed to members and follows parliamentary procedure. Fults also leads recruitment efforts, member engagement and retention programs and others.

"We have a strong KC brotherhood here in Fergus Falls and we support one another," he said. "Periodically we stop and remind ourselves that KCs have core principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. We strive as Catholic men to build friendships and encourage one another."

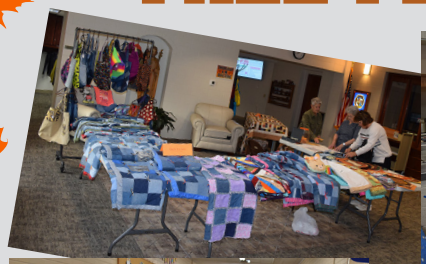
KC members not only volunteer for parish events such as the fall festival but also serve with various organizations in Fergus Falls such as service clubs, scout programs, Salvation Army and others. "Our KC council gives generously to OLV, its school and organizations such as Catholic Charities," Fults said.

Fiedler, as financial secretary for KC Council 3118, has many duties.

"The largest of these duties would be to send out the bill for the dues for

Continued on Pg 7.

FALL FESTIVAL































70 Years of Faith, Family, and Education

As another summer comes to an end and the halls of Our Lady of Victory School once again come alive with the laughter and excitement of children, we begin a new school year with grateful hearts. This year, however, is more than simply the beginning of another school year—it marks a very special milestone in the history of our parish and school community: 70 years of Our Lady of Victory School!

For seven decades, OLV School has been educating children, forming young hearts in the Catholic faith, and serving families in our community. Generations of students have walked through the doors of OLV, learning their ABCs and multiplication tables, celebrating sacraments, making lifelong friendships, serving others, and discovering what it means to live their faith.

A milestone like 70 years does not happen by accident. It is the result of generations of people who believed that Catholic education matters.

Our Lady of Victory Parish has played an enormous role in making the school what it is today. For 70 years, parishioners have prayed for the school, volunteered their time, supported it financially, taught its students, served on committees and boards, attended school events, and made countless sacrifices to ensure that Catholic education remained available to local families.

The school exists because generations of parishioners believed in its mission and were willing to invest in it. Their generosity has allowed OLV to weather difficult times, adapt to changing circumstances, welcome new families, and continue providing an education centered on Christ.

As we celebrate this anniversary, we are reminded that we are standing on the shoulders of those who came before us. The classrooms may look different than they did 70 years ago, technology has certainly changed, and the students walking through our doors today face a different world. But the heart of OLV remains the same: to provide children with an education grounded in faith, academics, character, and a love for Christ.

This year, we are excited to welcome 98 students in grades K–6 and 42 preschool students. It is exciting to see our school continue to grow and to welcome new families into the OLV community. Every one of these children represents another chapter in the story that began 70 years ago.

And while we celebrate the past, we also look toward the future. The best way to honor the 70 years that came before us is to continue building a strong foundation for the next 70. That means continuing to work together as a parish and school community, supporting our teachers and families, encouraging our students, and ensuring that future generations have the same opportunity to experience an OLV education.

To all of the parishioners—past and present—who have supported Our Lady of Victory School over these 70 years, thank you. Whether your contribution was measured in dollars, hours of volunteer service, prayers, or simply a belief in the importance of Catholic education, you have been part of this story.

As we begin another school year, we do so with tremendous gratitude for our past, excitement for our present, and hope for our future.

Happy 70th anniversary, Our Lady of Victory School!

May God continue to bless our school, our parish, our families, and our students—and may the next 70 years be filled with the same faith, dedication, and love that have carried OLV through the first seven decades.

OLV KCs success tied to leadership

Continued from Pg. 6.

our Knights at the beginning of the year, collect that money, also collect the raffle tickets for the state Knights of Columbus drawing and send them in."

He handles the applications for new members and sends that information to the Knights of Columbus representatives. Fiedler makes sure that the local KC financial reports are completed throughout the year.

Reports are filed with the district deputy and supreme council.

"I enjoy the personal relationships with KC members and email our monthly Knightly News newsletter to our members, answering any questions that may arise," he says. "I also report to our Council 3118 at the Knights of Columbus monthly meetings the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m."

Both Fults and Fiedler take pride in working hard for, in their words, "the good of KC council." They encourage OLV members to come as guests to a monthly meeting and see what KCs all is about.

Guests thinking about joining KCs also are invited to attend the yearly KC pork chop feed and potluck each August at the Athletic Park. A few days later is the annual KC RedHawks baseball outing in Fargo. Tickets are at reduced prices due to the generosity of KC sponsors for the baseball game.

Galaxy VBS: Launching Kids on a mission of God's love

By Danniele Jensen, Elem Faith Director



This past August, 75 children and 26 teen and adult volunteers came together for 3 fun filled evenings. Children learned about God's incredible love through Scripture, music, art, and games. They sang old favorites and learned some new songs too. They got to have interactive story time hearing about when Jesus healed the paralyzed man that friends dropped through a roof. They also got to hear all about Jesus in Space, a best-selling story written by Cecilia Cicone. We ended the 3-day event with everyone coming together to enjoy activities outside together.

A heartfelt thank you to our ACC, our wonderful volunteers, our parents, and especially all the children who joined us. A special thank you goes to St. Olaf Parish and Nancy Jennen for sharing their decorations with us. Nancy's incredible creativity and decorating talents help bring our theme to life each year and allow us to create an "out of this world" environment to match all the activities the nights provided. Your enthusiasm, generosity, and joyful participation made Galaxy VBS a fantastic week and a beautiful celebration of God's love.

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



The Canticle of the Sun
By Francis of Assisi

Most high, all powerful, all good Lord! All praise is yours, all glory, all honor, and all blessing. To you, alone, Most High, do they belong. No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars; in the heavens you have made them, precious and beautiful.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, and clouds and storms, and all the weather, through which you give your creatures sustenance.

Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten the night. He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth, who feeds us and rules us, and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of you; through those who endure sickness and trial. Happy those who endure in peace, for by you, Most High, they will be crowned.

Be praised, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whose embrace no living person can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Happy those she finds doing your most holy will. The second death can do no harm to them.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks, and serve him with great humility.

Due to conditions beyond Lee's control, Lee was unable to submit a REFLECTION this issue. Believe me, it hurts him more than it hurts you.