



Our Lady of HOPE

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Welcoming Dr. Douglas Palmer to Indiana and Washington Catholic Schools

New School President Brings Over 20 Years of Experience to Our Community

Last year, Dr. Douglas Palmer had no idea he'd be moving to Indiana. With over 20 years' experience in Catholic higher education, Dr. Palmer was looking for a change.

"I started as a history professor at a Catholic university, went all the way up to provost, then a university president of a Catholic institution in Michigan," he says. "I was thinking about different ways I could fulfill a personal calling. When students get to college, a lot of intellectual, faith, and character formation is gelled. As a parent who's put kids through Catholic schools, I felt a lot of the work of the Church in an educational context is at K through 12."

To fill the role of school president, Washington Catholic Schools performed a national search and connected with Dr. Palmer.

"It was an exciting opportunity," he says. "It's an opportunity for real growth and transformation, to create something special here. When I came down for my interview, I still wasn't sure because we're not from Indiana. I still have family at home, so I wanted to make sure it was the right opportunity."

Dr. Palmer's other passion is social teaching, especially in rural and agricultural communities.

"Our rural communities are places of great innovation,"

he says. "National press focuses on urban issues, not so much rural issues. Think about Pope Francis's call for care of creation and the Indiana Catholic bishops' call for an integrated ecology. It's a great laboratory for our students to learn mission and a call to serve and create positive outcomes in the world."

It didn't take long for Dr. Palmer to realize that Washington Catholic Schools was the right fit for him. After some interviews in early March, he was offered the position and was eager to get started.

"There's a phrase about 'Hoosier hospitality,'" Dr. Palmer says. "I discovered quickly it's not a myth. I felt so welcomed and drove home from the interview thinking this is where I'm meant to be."

He started in April and got to know the school, the faculty, and some students.

"Students are what it's all about," Dr. Palmer says. "I came at the end of the year, so I didn't get a chance to know



*We welcome Dr. Douglas Palmer to Indiana
and our Washington Catholic Schools.*

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A LEGACY OF FAITH

Passing on the Gift of Faith Through Stewardship

Stewardship begins with gratitude. When we recognize that every good gift comes from God, we naturally desire to share those gifts with others. While people often think about sharing their time, talent, and treasure, one of the most important gifts we can share is our faith.

None of us came to know Christ entirely on our own. Someone helped guide us along the way. Parents, grandparents, pastors, teachers, mentors, and faithful friends introduced us to prayer, taught us about God's love, encouraged us through challenges, and helped us grow as disciples.

The faith we possess today is, in many ways, part of a legacy that has been handed down from generation to generation.

Throughout Scripture, God's people are called to remember His goodness and proclaim His works to those who come after them. Parents are instructed to teach their children about the Lord. Elders are encouraged to share the stories of God's faithfulness. Each generation is entrusted with the responsibility of helping the next generation come to know and love Jesus Christ.

This responsibility is deeply connected to stewardship. As Christian stewards, we recognize that everything we have ultimately belongs to God. We are called to receive His gifts with gratitude, cultivate them responsibly, share them generously, and return them to Him with increase. The gift of faith is no exception. God has entrusted us with the Good News of Jesus Christ not simply for our own benefit, but so that we may share it with others.

Parents fulfill this mission in a special way as the primary teachers of the faith for their children. Through family prayer, participation in the sacraments, and conversations

about God's presence in everyday life, they help lay the foundation for a lifelong relationship with Christ. Yet the work of passing on the faith extends beyond the family. It is a responsibility shared by the entire parish community.

Grandparents often play a particularly important role. Through their prayers, encouragement, and witness, they help younger generations understand the value of a life centered on God. Many Catholics can trace some of their strongest faith influences to a grandparent who prayed faithfully, attended Mass consistently, and demonstrated trust in God through both joyful and difficult times.

Catechists, ministry leaders, parish volunteers, and fellow parishioners also contribute to this important mission. Every conversation about faith, every invitation to Mass, every act of kindness, and every example of Christian discipleship can help someone grow closer to Christ.

Often, the most powerful lessons are not taught in a classroom but observed through the witness of faithful lives.

As stewards, we are called to think not only about the blessings God has given us today but also about the legacy we will leave behind. Material possessions eventually fade, but a faith-filled example can continue to bear fruit for generations. When we share our faith, encourage others, and help lead people to Christ, we participate in God's work of building His kingdom.

Each of us has received the gift of faith from someone who came before us. Now God invites us to share that gift with those who will come after us. By embracing this responsibility, we live stewardship in a profound way and help ensure that the light of Christ continues to shine in future generations.

THE SAINTS SHOW US THE WAY

Dear Parishioners,

Throughout the month of September, the Church invites us to celebrate the lives of many remarkable saints through feast days and memorials on the liturgical calendar. During the final days of the month, we commemorate St. Matthew on Sept. 21, St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) on Sept. 23, St. Vincent de Paul on Sept. 27, the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael on Sept. 29, and St. Jerome on Sept. 30. Each lived in a different time, served the Lord in different ways, and possessed different gifts. Yet they all shared one important characteristic — they offered their lives completely to God.

In many ways, they lived stewardship long before the Church ever spoke of it in those terms.

When Jesus called St. Matthew, he immediately left behind his former way of life to follow Christ. Padre Pio devoted countless hours to prayer and hearing confessions, generously sharing his time and spiritual gifts for the sake of others. St. Vincent de Paul recognized the face of Christ in the poor and spent his life serving those most in need. The Archangels faithfully carried out God's will, reminding us that our highest calling is loving obedience to Him. St. Jerome used his remarkable intellect and talents to translate and teach Sacred Scripture, making God's Word more accessible to generations of believers.

Although their vocations were very different, each understood the same fundamental truth: everything they had was a gift from God and was meant to be returned to Him in loving service.



That is also the foundation of Christian stewardship. Stewardship is not simply about supporting the parish or volunteering for a ministry. It is first a way of life that recognizes every aspect of our lives as a gift entrusted to us by God. Our time, our talents, our resources, our relationships, and our opportunities are all meant to be used for His glory and for the good of others.

Most of us are not called to extraordinary lives that will one day be recognized by the Church. We are called to something equally important — faithful discipleship in the ordinary circumstances of everyday

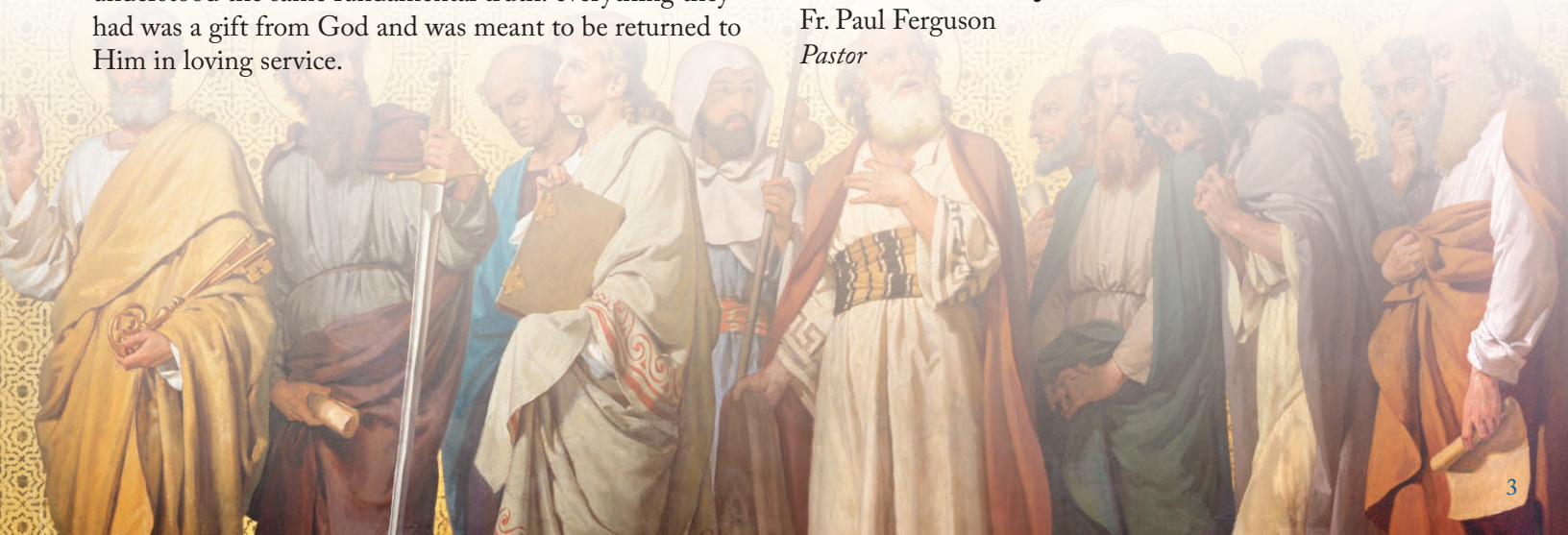
life. Holiness grows through daily acts of prayer, generosity, service, forgiveness, and love. These are the same virtues that shaped the saints, and they are the virtues God desires to cultivate in each of us.

The saints remind us that stewardship is ultimately about becoming the people God created us to be. As we celebrate these great witnesses of the faith throughout September, may their example inspire us to follow Christ more faithfully, serve others more generously, and continue growing in holiness one day at a time. Like the saints before us, may we offer our lives to God with grateful hearts, trusting that He will use our gifts to accomplish His work in the world.

In Christ,

Fr. Paul Ferguson

Fr. Paul Ferguson
Pastor



PRAISE

Sharing Talents to Draw Us in



For about 20 years, the Praise Band at Our Lady of Hope has been serving our community with their talents and music.

"The goal of the Praise Mass is for the youth of our parish to learn the different roles they can serve in as lay ministers at the Mass. To give them a deeper understanding of the Mass and to try things they may be nervous about with the support of their peers," says Hannah Freyberger.

Hannah helps by leading this ministry — choosing the music, putting together the binders, setting up practices, and scheduling the youth to participate in the Mass.

"I have loved participating in the Praise Mass since I was in middle school, so much so that I continued to help during college and beyond," she says. "It was something that I did not want to see die, especially because we have had so many people throughout the years come up to us and mention how much the music that we played had meant to them. So, when it was coming to the point of the ministry fading out, I felt like I needed to find a way to help it continue to grow."

The Praise Mass takes place monthly on the fourth Sunday of the month. The mission of the group is to provide meaningful and uplifting music that honors and praises the Lord. Music has a powerful way of drawing people into participation and spiritual encounter with God. It can be a sensory and emotional experience at times, touching those who listen and participate.

In turn, Hannah takes special care when selecting songs for the band and Mass. This includes reading the Sunday Mass readings multiple times, reflecting on the words and message. She takes the decision to adoration and prayer, asking God to help her choose the music. The band uses a variety of songs, from classical to contemporary.

"Not only do we just listen to music, but we also feel it in the vibrations — it activates memories, and it helps us express that which we may have trouble expressing otherwise," she says. "So, when we are playing music as part of worship for the holy of all holies, we must be very meticulous about what we play, how we play it, and how we use our varying instruments, dynamics, and tempo to help draw people into the focus of the Mass, worshipping our Lord."



BAND

to Joyful and Moving Worship

The important part, Hannah says, is that the musicians are playing the music to glorify God.

The Mass itself offers a special opportunity for the youth of the parish, where they can serve in a variety of ways. The music is done by adults, so the youth can participate in the Mass doing roles they may not normally do, such as greeter, lector, gifts, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and collection.

"It is unique because it is the only Mass where we schedule youth for all liturgical roles," Hannah says. "It is also the only Mass the Praise Band plays for. The Praise Mass is geared for everyone! I have been very intentional about trying to make the music for this Mass something that can touch everyone and help them enter more fully into the worship of our Lord at Mass."

While the Praise Band has been active for many years, it has changed over time. It began as a youth choir/band when Hannah was in middle school. Two of the guitarists, Rick and Mike, have been playing for the Mass for most of the last 20 years.

"The original premise was that singers and some of the musicians were youth from our parish," Hannah says. "However, over time our numbers began to dwindle. A lot of our youth are so busy these days with multiple commitments, and the time commitment for practicing for playing a Mass like this is a lot. So, when we lost our last three committed seniors in 2022, we began to discuss what the future of the band looked like."

The Praise Band supports the parish's overall mission of stewardship by offering both youth and young adults an opportunity to participate and share their time and talents in service to the Church. Any youth who can commit to practices are welcome to join as musicians as well. The current Praise Mass occurs on the fourth Sunday of the month at the 9 a.m. Mass. Following the Mass, the youth group provides donuts for the attendees, fostering

community and fellowship. There is also a donation jar for the Youth Ministry in which parishioners can give to help continue to provide the youth with retreat and pilgrimage opportunities.

"I would like our parishioners to know that we are so grateful for their support of this ministry," Hannah says. "We love hearing you sing along at Mass! We are also so appreciative of your kind words and texts. We have had so many people reach out to us after Mass, expressing how Mass felt reverent — they felt like they were able to focus on worship and prayer more. We've had many people bonding over their love of a song and asking about where to listen to a specific song. Music has a powerful way of tugging at our heart and mind and just delving us deeper and deeper into prayer and worship."



To get involved or learn more, contact Hannah Freyberger at 812-698-1546, or her husband, Kyle, at 812-430-6244.

BUILDING A PARISH FAMILY

Strengthening the Bonds of Parish Life

A parish is much more than a place where people gather for Mass each week. It is a community of believers united in Christ and called to support one another in faith. When parishioners develop meaningful relationships, share their gifts, and work together in service, a parish begins to reflect the family of God it is meant to be.

Strong families are built through trust, communication, shared experiences, and mutual care. The same is true within a parish community. Relationships grow when people pray together, serve together, and accompany one another through both joyful and difficult moments.

Stewardship plays an important role in building these connections. Stewardship begins with recognizing that every person has received gifts from God. These gifts are not intended to remain hidden or focused solely on personal interests. Rather, they are meant to be shared for the benefit of others and the growth of God's kingdom.

Every parishioner has something valuable to contribute. Some serve through liturgical ministries, catechesis, outreach programs, or parish leadership. Others offer hospitality, encouragement, prayer, or quiet acts of service that often go unnoticed. Together, these gifts help create a vibrant parish family where people feel connected and supported.

Building community requires intentional participation. It is easy to attend Mass and leave without forming

relationships. Stewardship challenges us to move beyond being spectators and become active participants in the life of the parish. By becoming involved, we not only strengthen the community but also deepen our own faith.

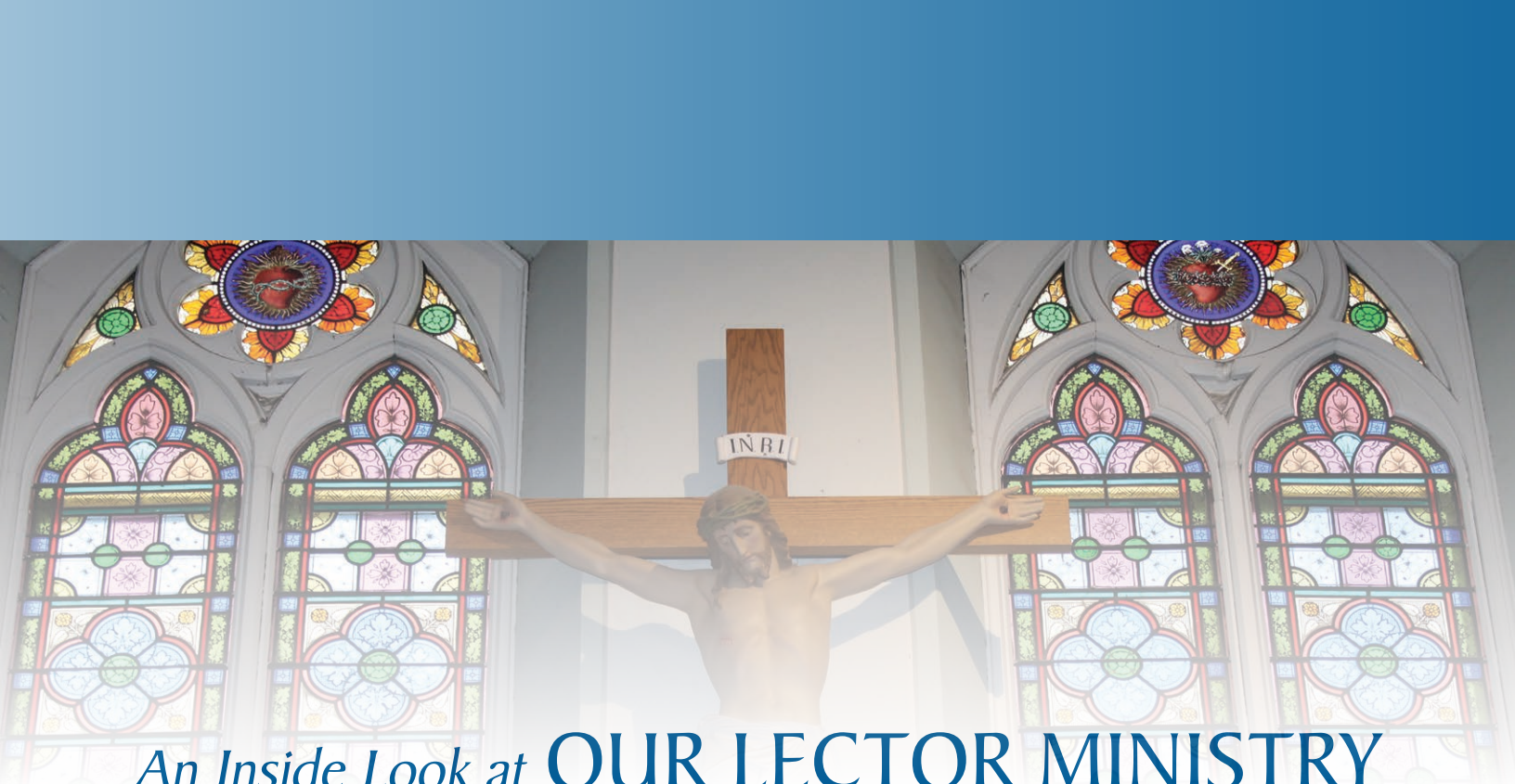
Parish families become especially important during times of hardship. Illness, loss, and personal struggles often reveal the strength of a caring community. When parishioners rally around one another with prayer, encouragement, meals, visits, and practical support, stewardship becomes visible in powerful ways.

A strong parish family also creates an environment where discipleship can flourish. People are more likely to grow in faith when they feel known, valued, and supported. Relationships help sustain us on our spiritual journey and remind us that we do not walk alone.

As Christian stewards, we are called to share our gifts and invest in the life of the community God has entrusted to us. By building strong relationships and supporting one another in faith, we help create parishes that reflect Christ's love and strengthen His Church.

When parishioners embrace stewardship as a way of life, they do more than support parish programs. They help build a true parish family — one rooted in faith, united in purpose, and committed to helping one another grow closer to Christ.





An Inside Look at **OUR LECTOR MINISTRY**

Blessed to Proclaim Christ's Living Word at Mass

How beautiful it is that Christ is alive and present in the Word! And as St. John Chrysostom said, "The Holy Scriptures were not given to us that we should enclose them in books, but that we should engrave them upon our hearts." In turn, a lector participates in the Liturgy by proclaiming the Word of God aloud at Mass. Those who proclaim the Word must have a deep respect for the profound belief in His presence as revealed in Scripture.

Parishioner Mary Jo Seller is one of many lectors for Our Lady of Hope Parish and has a deep love for the Word.

"There are many very good ways to serve the Church," Mary Jo says. "But what can be more important than proclaiming the Word of God to the people in the pews?"

There are many opportunities for the laity to participate in the celebration of the Mass, and being a lector is just one way someone could contribute. Those who have experience with public speaking, or have a career that naturally utilizes that skill set, are encouraged to use those experiences by assisting in the Mass.

"A well-prepared lector can bring the reading to life," Mary Jo says. "It can become more than just words on a page.



Parishioner Mary Jo Seller is one of many lectors for Our Lady of Hope Parish and has a deep love for the Word.

Everyone likes to hear a good story, and lectors are privileged to tell the best story of all. I feel like my ability to lector is one of God's gifts to me. We are called to share our gifts with others. That is part of our stewardship to our parish."

Fr. Paul holds several training sessions for new lectors throughout the year so that interested individuals can feel well prepared about how to read at Mass.

"If lectors prepare, or as Scott Hahn says, 'preprayer,' the readings ahead of time, they can become more familiar with God's Word," Mary Jo says. "A lector should be faith-filled, faithful, and sincere — to be able to take in the meaning and learn from the readings and truly deepen our spirituality."

Mary Jo uses a Prayer of Preparation that all lectors are welcome to use — "I have tried to take within me the meaning of what I am about to read."

St. Paul says to the Romans, "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). This powerful message emphasizes that in receiving the Word of God, we are receiving Christ Himself and seeking to step away from what is ordinary and open to conversion and encounter.

Those interested in becoming a lector may contact the parish office at 812-259-1436.

315 N.E. Third Street
Washington, IN 47501
812-254-2883
www.ccwash.org

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them. I'm looking forward to having a whole year to go through that life cycle with students at all ages of an academic year. Fall sports, art activities, musical performances, just being around students and learning more about them throughout the entire year — that's what I'm most excited about."

Dr. Palmer already began making great use of his time at Washington Catholic Schools.

"I did a survey of our staff and of our faculty," he says. "I was so impressed by how seriously our teachers and staff take the faith-based and evangelizing mission of the school. There's great pride in the participation of our students in the Sacramental life and the liturgical life of the church."

Dr. Palmer and his wife, Cathy, have three boys. Theo just graduated from St. Louis University. Charlie is starting at Michigan State University this fall. Jack is a sophomore

at Washington Catholic Schools. Dr. Palmer is also an Army veteran.

"I served in the 82nd Airborne Division," he says. "I've actually jumped out of perfectly good airplanes. I was in for four years. Also, I'm passionate about fly fishing. If I could make money as a fly fisherman, I would do it. This may get some groans, but I'm also passionate about supporting the Pittsburgh Steelers."

Truly, we're grateful to welcome Dr. Palmer to our community and look forward to all he has to offer our Catholic schools, students, faculty, and staff.

"If we understand who we are and really why we are here, why is this parish so committed to keeping a school in this community — it's about salvation," Dr. Palmer says. "It's about evangelization. Seeing that we understand that means we can do what we need to do to grow and thrive."

