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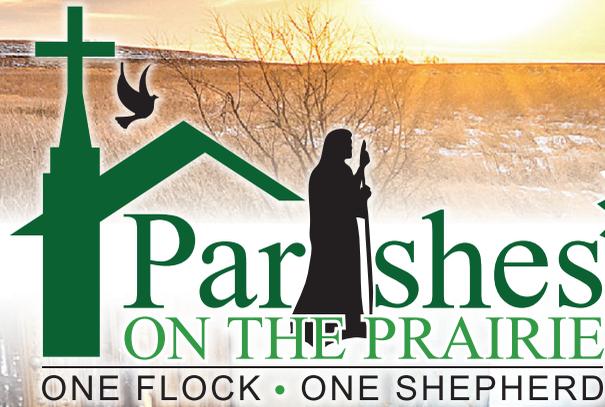
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OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS



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Parishes
ON THE PRAIRIE
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DECEMBER 2025

Watch for your next bi-monthly newsletter at the beginning of February



Karen Toenies (from left), Mary Borgerding, Nancy Schleicher and Jacque Polipnick

Small group, great faith

Discipleship quad deepens relationships with God, each other

There is no minimum size limit for an uplifting Catholic group; as Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst."

In the case of the discipleship quad in the Parishes on the Prairie Area Catholic Community, that number is four: Mary Schleicher, Jacque Polipnick, Karen Toenies and Mary Borgerding. The group has

been meeting and meditating for several years so far, starting with the guidance of a discipleship guide, and they hope to see other similar groups in the ACC someday.

"We have a bond through reading the Bible together, sharing our stories, relating to it and putting it all together," Borgerding said. "It gives us a different perspective and different interpretations. ... Sure, you can sit at home and read your Bible, you can try to do it by yourself, but (this) is more enlightening because we have more minds and different opinions and different ways of looking at things."



Discipleship from front

The group started about three and a half years ago when Schleicher worked for the ACC. Fr. Greg Paffel asked her if she would be interested in going on a retreat to strengthen her relationship with God; when Schleicher said she did not like large groups, Fr. Paffel recommended a small group setting and gave her a copy of "Discipleship Quad" by Bob Rice.

Schleicher thought about it for a month before deciding to give the method a try. The next step, then, was deciding who to invite to her group; "Discipleship Quad" recommends a gathering of four people of the same gender. At first, Schleicher was not so sure Polipnick would be interested, considering how busy she was, but Polipnick agreed.

"I asked Karen next, and she said yes right away," Schleicher said. "Then, we tried to come up with another name, ... so I prayed about it; I woke up at 4:30 in the morning, and God said, 'Mary Borgerding.' I called, ... and she said yes, and that was how it began."

The other members were also drawn to the group's smaller size.

"I wouldn't even be in a group bigger than this because I wouldn't be comfortable," Toenies said. "If there's 20 people in a Bible study, I wouldn't say anything."

Their first meeting was held in the music room in the basement of St. Paul's Church in Sauk Centre. Afterward,

though, they started meeting at each other's homes on a rotational basis, often with refreshments. The host will also be the facilitator for the reading and reflections. The meetings occur every other week or once every three weeks, depending on schedules; they also take the summer off.

After some time for socializing, the members would go into a lesson from "Discipleship Quad," which is a four-book series or whatever book they are reading at the time.

"At the beginning, we didn't say (or) write as much," Schleicher said. "But as time went on, the pages got fuller; we started to write more."

Meetings conclude with the group exchanging intentions before ending in prayer.

"We pray a lot together," Borgerding said. "We can see it's making a difference in the lives of the people we're praying for."

The group finished the four books in about three years, and they are currently reading "Unshakeable" by Fr. Mike Schmitz. They plan to return to "Discipleship Quad" someday for review as well.

"When you're done, it (the 'Discipleship Quad') asks us to start another quad group," Schleicher said.

"We like our group here and are very comfortable here. I ordered another book and presented it to someone else. ... This is very easy with just four people."

ADULT FAITH OPPORTUNITY

Form a Discipleship Quad, select 3 other people and select times to meet that work for your groups schedule.

A Discipleship Quad is a group of four men or women who commit to meeting for 10 sessions to grow in faith.

There is a book that we will provide for each person in your group for the first 10 weeks. Each session lasts 1.5 hours and the book guides you through what to do during the week on your own and when your group meets together. At the end of the 10 weeks, your group decides if they want to continue through the rest of the program (three more books in the series, each for about 10 weeks). This program is out of Steubenville. For questions or to get books for your Quad, call or text Kathy at 320-293-6980.

For the four, they have found themselves drawn into a deeper relationship with God — along with a deeper relationship with each other.

"These were my friends in one capacity or another, but now, it's different," Polipnick said. "I feel like we have a relationship that's special, where you share things that matter and are important."

Another benefit from the discipleship group is that it has given its members a framework and guidance for sharing their faith with others.

"None of us are as afraid to talk to other people about God anymore, to bring up things, to talk about what we're doing here," Schleicher said. "(The book) is teaching us how to be better disciples, not to be afraid to go out and talk to people about our faith."

The exercises from "Discipleship Quad" often had the members referring to the Bible, including the upcoming Mass readings, so everyone got to share their perspectives and lessons learned before they heard the words again from the pulpit.

"It makes us stop and think a little," Borgerding said.

The discipleship group also engages in activities outside their meetings — for instance, preparing meals for people who have recently lost a loved one, participating in clothing drives, cleaning cemeteries and singing at Fairway Pines Senior Living in Sauk Centre.

Schleicher recommends the discipleship small group format to people who want to be more involved in their faith but are not quite sure how to do it.

"Pray about it and really consider it," she said. "It's been a blessing and a positive influence for me and with everyone."

The other members of her group agree.

"Whatever your excuses happen to be, this is doable," Polipnick said. "It's a small group. ... You can tailor it to your needs or what works for you."

NCYC unpacked

About 16,000 young people gathered in Indianapolis for the National Catholic Youth Conference from November 20-22, and among them were 16 of our own.

Together, they prayed, heard powerful speakers, spent time in the sacraments and grew in friendship with one another. Most importantly, they encountered the presence of our Lord.

We invited a few of our teens to share about their experience.

NCYC page 8

To hear more about the youths' experiences at NCYC, an episode will be launched Dec. 1 on our "True Witness" podcast with guests Abigail Mohs, Anastasia Polipnick and Olivia Marsh. Steaming available on Apple, Spotify or Amazon.



**Raphael Goellner,
12th grade**

Parish: Our Lady of the Angels

Parents: Philip and Sara Goellner

What was one moment at the conference you know will stay with you for a long time? One moment that will stick with me forever is when some random person and I started talking about our lives and God. I don't even know the person's name, but we bonded over God and NCYC despite being from two completely different walks of life.



**Maggie Bromenshenkel,
9th grade**

Parish: St. Paul's

Parents: Shawn and Paula Bromenshenkel

What was one moment at the conference you know will stay with you for a long time? I never got to meet my grandpa because he passed away before I was born. During the closing Mass at NCYC, the song "Gratitude" was playing. This song always had a place in my heart, and after I returned to my seat from Communion, I suddenly started to cry. I felt my grandpa sitting beside me, almost like he was telling me he loved me, and I was protected. In that holy moment, I experienced something I've been longing to feel for a very long time.

Upcoming EVENTS

Baptism Class

Wednesday, Dec. 3
St. Paul's Meeting Room
7 p.m.

First Saturday Devotions

Saturday, Dec. 6
Our Lady of Angels
Confession: 7:45 a.m.
Adoration: 8 a.m.
Rosary: 8:30 a.m.
Mass: 9 a.m.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration

Saturday, Dec. 13
Our Lady of the Angels
Mass: 5 p.m. followed by
food and activities

Communal Reconciliation Services

Sunday, Dec. 14
St. Francis de Sales 1-2 p.m.
St. Paul's 3-5 p.m.

Christmas Mass Schedule

Christmas Eve, Dec. 24
Sts. Peter & Paul 4 p.m.
St. Paul's 4 p.m.
Our Lady of the Angels 6 p.m.
Christmas Day, Dec. 25
St. Alexis 8 a.m.
St. Donatus 10:30 a.m.
St. Paul's 10:30 a.m.

First Saturday Devotions

Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026
Our Lady of the Angels
Confession: 7:45 a.m.
Adoration: 8 a.m.
Rosary: 8:30 a.m.
Mass: 9 a.m.

Regular Reconciliation Schedule

St. Donatus, Wednesday, 7:45 a.m.
St. Paul's, Thursday, 4 p.m.;
Saturday, 3 p.m.
Sts. Peter & Paul, Saturday,
5:30 p.m.
St. Alexis, Sunday,
7:45 a.m.

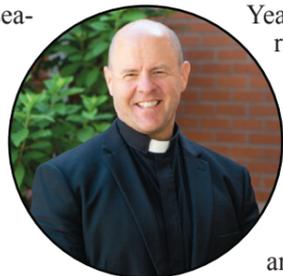
Resolved in Christ

Advent is here, a penitential season in the Church, just as is Lent. In Lent, we prepare ourselves for the death and resurrection of Jesus, coming through a 40-day mini-passion; so it is with Advent, in which we are called to prepare ourselves for such a great gift — that Christ took on flesh. As John 1:14 tells us, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

This season, I'd like to compare how we prepare ourselves during Advent with how we prepare ourselves for a New Year's Resolution. There is a tendency to only look at our New Year's resolutions by improving our bodies or habits, and we try to put on a "new self," but let us be mindful of not just the body but our soul as well. Ephesians 4:24 states, "Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." Advent is a time to really examine our conscience, allowing the Lord to inform us where our character needs to be more like His. This is the reason we practice religion, so our character changes to mirror Christ's.

It's helpful for us to examine some of the biblical passages we see going on around and even before Christmas. The Holy Family had to journey 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and they had to go through physical hardships; this has to do with the mortification of the body to prepare for Christ. Then, you have the innkeeper who couldn't take them in because he had no room. Do we have enough room in our hearts, in our minds, where we're focused on Him? Do we reach Christmas morning, saying, "I have made room for Jesus' coming by not focusing on material gifts and things, and now, my focus is on spiritual gifts?" How can we purge ourselves so that, on Christmas morning, we're not focused on presents but focused on Christ's presence within us? I lack nothing of the other things I give up, but in fact, I have even more because I have made room for Him in my heart.

This is what Advent is all about, and it is a springboard for what we can do in our New



Year's resolution — not a secular resolution but a Christ-filled resolution to live that gift we receive, where we resolve to change our ways of living in our spiritual life.

Still, we can take aspects of secular resolutions and model that with our spiritual goals. With any physical goal we have, we tell others, and other people can hold you accountable. Same with your spiritual life; when you're trying to change your character into Christ, maybe ask someone to help you avoid the near occasion of sin. When you make your spiritual goals like your earthly goals, your bodily goals, known to others, you have someone who's helping you. That cross is shared, and ultimately, we yoke ourselves to Christ, because with Him, the yoke is easy and the burden is light.

We can give back to God who put on flesh by following Romans 13:14, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." Then, we break free from the worldly vices, from the Father of Lies, from the root of evil which can cause anxiety, depression and a lack of self-esteem. All these issues come with this weight, but Christ says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you."

At the seminary, my spiritual director's favorite quote was from Lamentations 3:22-23, "The Favours of the Lord are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent; They are renewed each morning, so great is his faithfulness." In all of these journeys, from Advent to New Year's resolutions, we're going to fall, but every single morning is a new opportunity to start fresh, to once again devote our desire back to the Lord. He is with us, He encourages us, He never stops loving us. In your own spiritual resolution to conform yourself to Christ, know that each morning, regardless of how you did the previous day, God is with you, God is loving you and God is strengthening you.

God Bless,
Fr. Kevin

Marian Americas

Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration invites entire ACC to Dec. 13 event

In the cold midst of winter, Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to St. Juan Diego with a message of peace and unity that has resonated throughout the Americas. In honor of Our Blessed Mother and her patronage, local Hispanic Catholics in the Parishes on the Prairie Area Catholic Community are holding their annual Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration Saturday, Dec. 13, starting with a 5 p.m. Mass at Our Lady of the Angels Church in Sauk Centre.

"The features of this celebration combine deep religious faith with Mexico cultural identity, including traditional food and the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe apparition," said Sonia Garcia, a Parishes on the Prairie Hispanic outreach coordinator.

This will be Garcia's second time participating in the Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebrations as a member of ACC staff. For Emma Meyer, another ACC Hispanic outreach coordinator, this will be her third year in the celebration, but she often went to similar events in Melrose and Cold Spring when she was growing up.

"I didn't know Spanish, (and) I didn't have close friends who spoke Spanish,"



Meyer said. "It was just, like, Hey, the church is putting this on, and we're invited; let's go and celebrate, so I got to be able to participate in it that way."

A few years ago, the ACC Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration mainly consisted

of a recitation of the rosary, followed by a small meal. Last year, though, greatly expanded the event's scope; Fr. Efrain Rosado, OSB, from St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, came to St. Paul's Church to celebrate the Mass in Spanish, and the parishioners put on a

play based on the story of our Lady of Guadalupe. Afterward, congregants held a candlelight procession to the Centre for Christ, in Sauk Centre where there were decorations, a meal and time for fellowship.

Guadalupe page 7



All ate and were satisfied



ACC fundraisers serve over 5,500 meals

As the weather cools down, kitchens around the Parishes on the Prairie Area Catholic Community warmed up for their annual fundraisers. These volunteer-run events, many of which featured both dine-in and takeout options, made sure the people who received the over 5,500 total meals left satisfied in both body and spirit.

Holy Family Fall Dinner, Sept. 13

— Meals served: 180, all dine-in.
— Menu: chicken, ham, mashed potatoes, corn, dressing.
— Proceeds benefit: Holy Family School, Sauk Centre.

— “We were blown away by the support of HFS families and alumni who showed up to make the event a huge success. The generosity of the community to help put on the event was remarkable, we couldn’t have asked for a better support system. Guests at the event enjoyed trying their luck at

a variety of Vegas games like human slot machines, table games and bingo. This event is important because it gives parents a chance to get to know each other outside of traditional school events while also raising money for the school we all love.” — Chelsea Bertram, committee lead

St. Donatus Fall Dinner, Sept 21

— Meals served: 549; 421 dine-in, 128 takeout.

— Menu: roasted turkey, ham, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, coleslaw, corn, pie and more.

— Proceeds benefit: St. Donatus Church, Brooten.

— “They came from a long ways to get here this year. They know it’s going to be a good meal.” — Dave Rooney, host with Clara Rooney

St. Alexius Sausage Supper, Oct. 5

— Meals served: about 1,300, both dine-in and takeout.

— Menu: sausage, potatoes, gravy, head cheese, sauerkraut, ribs, glazed carrots, bread, dessert bars, milk, coffee.

— Proceeds benefit: Holy Family School-Sauk Centre students from St. Alexius, along with St. Alexius Church expenses above normal operating costs.

— “This is a great parish community. We have a parishioner who’s streamlined the kitchen; everything was so efficient this year. I had a couple of phone calls after the supper from people who’d come for the first time, and they were amazed at how a parish of 140 families could put on something like this.” — Barb Bentfield, committee member

Our Lady of the Angels

Chow Mein Dinner, Oct. 16

— Meals served: 1,437; 380 dine-in, 1,057 takeout.

— Menu: Chicken chow mein, rice, chow mein noodles, dinner rolls, pickled beets, carrots, pickles, pie.

Fundraisers page 7

Guadalupe

from page 5

This year, the Centre for Christ is aiming to expand the celebration with one major change: The invitation is open to the general English-speaking Catholic community.

“Last year, it wasn’t publicized as much, English-wise,” Meyer said. “We will have a program in English, so you’ll be able to follow along with the readings. Then, (you’ll) be able to share in the cultural experience of being able to try some different foods, hear the music (and) just see how they celebrate.”

With this invitation, Garcia is looking forward to seeing more people come and learn more about Our Lady of Guadalupe, including those who bring flowers to lay at the statue of Mary.

“We are all one church, and we must care for one another and share our faith and beliefs,” she said. “Our Lady of Guadalupe is a powerful symbol of hope and unity.”

Fr. Rosado has agreed to return and celebrate the Mass for the day, but the location for the Mass and subsequent gathering have been changed to Our Lady of the Angels Church in Sauk Centre. Last year, the approximately 100 people who showed up were packed into the Centre for Christ, and there were not enough tables and chairs; Our Lady of the Angles has more furniture and space, and because there are not any conflicting events at that church, organizers will have an easier time with decorations and other preparations.

Of course, there is also the benefit of celebrating a Marian feast in a Marian church.



“Our Lady of Guadalupe has a special place in a lot of people’s hearts, specifically those who are Mexican,” Meyer said. “She’s always been their patroness, whether they were in Mexico, Central America or here in the U.S.”

The official feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe is Friday, Dec. 12, but the Centre for Christ set their event for Dec. 13 so it would not interfere with similar celebrations in Melrose Dec. 12 and in Long Prairie Dec. 14.

“People are invited from other places,” Meyer said. “We’ve planned it so people can come from other communities if they want, and they can go to multiple.”

Volunteers are working on lining up a play for Sauk Centre’s event, and Meyer knows of one mother who is interested in teaching children a traditional dance from the part of Mexico where she is from. Meyer also plans to have educational materials at the event, teaching people about Our Lady of Guadalupe and her message.

Dinner will be provided, with the main feature being traditional tamales.

“You take a corn husk and make this corn dough; it’s kind of got this gritty texture to it,” Meyer said. “You put in pieces of meat, either pork or chicken, and sometimes, they add vegetables. Then, you fold up the corn leaf and boil it, ... and then it’s served in the corn leaf, and you unfold it. You don’t eat the corn husk part, but then you eat the insides.”

Through this celebration, the Centre for Christ is eager to not only support the local Hispanic Catholic community but also connect them to the ACC as a whole.

“When (Our Lady of Guadalupe) appeared, she was Mestizo, a mix of Spanish and indigenous, and she unified those two cultures,” Meyer said. “She’s still doing that today, helping in unify the two cultures. ... Any Mexican house you go into, they have images of her. She’s very well loved, so for them to be able to celebrate their mom is something very special.”



Fundraisers

from page 6

— Proceeds benefit: Holy Family School, Sauk Centre.

— “The event went very well. We could not have done it without the Chow Mein Dinner committee and all the wonderful volunteers and donors who made the dinner a success.”

— Mary Gruber, co-chair with Rob Gruber

St. Francis DeSales Sausage Supper, Oct. 26

— Meals served: between 900-950, at least 600 of which were dine-in.

— Menu: sausage, pancakes, ham, dinner rolls, homemade baked goods.

— Proceeds benefit: St. Francis DeSales Church capital projects.

— “The turnout was really good, and the participation for the people who make the supper work was good. It’s a fundraiser, but the real purpose of this is to get our parishioners together and build up fellowship.” — Paul Rooney, co-chair with Aaron Liebl

Elrosa Ham and Egg Breakfast, Nov. 2

— Meals served: 1,305 (a new record); 828 dine-in, 477 takeout, including 72 for Eagle’s Healing Nest in Sauk Centre.

— Menu: ham, scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, applesauce, cinnamon bread, coffee, regular and chocolate milk.

— Proceeds benefit: Sts. Peter and Paul Church.

— “We had awesome help, and our kids helped clean tables. Our kitchen had a lot of people, and I want to thank them all.” — Harry Zenzen, co-chair with Carol Zenzen, Bonnie Heinze and Jan Arceneau



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NCYC from page 3



**Leah Peters,
10th grade**

Parish: Our Lady of the Angels

Parents: Jeff and Melanie Peters

What was one moment at the conference you know will stay with you for a long time?

The encouraging words of Pope Leo XIV about true friendships. He told us that you want friends that are going to encourage you to become a better person and bring you closer to Jesus, not friends that are going to tear you away from him. You want friendships that are rooted in faith, rooted in Jesus, and where you are able to speak honestly about what you feel, what you think and what you experience. Honesty will allow Jesus to work through the people he has placed in your life. I was able to meet some amazing people at the conference where I found these traits through them and know that they will always want the same for them!



Brooke Sunderman, 11th grade

Parish: St. Paul's

Parents: Jeremy and LeeAnn Sunderman

What was one moment at the conference you know will stay with you for a long time? When we got to go on a zoom call with Pope Leo XIV. It was such a surreal moment to be able to hear the Pope actually speak to us. His words were so inspiring and really encouraged me to grow in my faith. I learned that having a relationship with God is the most important relationship you could ever obtain. I also learned that it is essential to embrace your faith so that you can use it to make a positive impact on the world.



Henry Miller, 9th grade

Parish: St. Alexius

Parents: Nick and Crystle Miller

How did this conference change the way you see your faith or your relationship with Jesus? The conference has changed my view of Jesus by showing how merciful Jesus truly is. No matter what you've done, no matter where you are in life, Jesus will never abandon you and will always be there to forgive you. This changed my relationship with Jesus through trust and dedication to following him as a disciple.