



ST. ALBERT

SUMMER 2025

the Great



PASTOR'S NOTE



Fr Ben
HASSE
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I hope you're having a great summer so far! St. Al's has some big transitions with Fr. Romeo leaving and Fr. Prijo arriving on July 1st. We also saw the retirement of Joe Rushlau, our Development Director, and now Daniel Ryan has begun in that role. We'll also be welcoming two new FOCUS missionaries in August. Please pray for everyone in these endings and new beginnings!

We have a beautiful story inside about the work of our NFP Trainer, Kylie Hoehn! There was so much powerful testimony from students and alumni that we have a fuller story available on our blog. Kylie is impacting women, engaged couples, and families with her science-based work that is rooted in her MTU degree in biomedical engineering!

There was a lot of growth this year at St. Al's! Two areas where that has been happening has been in our outreach to student athletes and to students involved in fraternities and sororities. FOCUS calls these initiatives "FOCUS Greek" and "Varsity Catholic." We've covered some of the athlete outreach recently, but inside you'll find an interview with one of our missionaries focused on the Greeks!

Thank you for making all of this possible by your prayers and generosity!

ON THE COVER:

Top: A group of St. Al's graduates pose for a photo this spring during the celebratory ice cream social.

Left: St. Al's students took part in the Winter Carnival Stage Revue.

Right: Celebrating long-time parishioner Joe Kirkish's 100th birthday in May.

NEW FACE FOR DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Hi! My name is Daniel Ryan, I'm the new Development Director at St. Al's. I graduated in spring 2024 with a Bachelor's in Scientific & Technical Communication. I grew up in Berkley, MI, and attended church at the National Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak, MI.

I chose to go to Michigan Tech because I was interested in engineering and wanted a good program with smaller classes. I came to St. Al's during move-in weekend in fall 2020 and found a community of young Catholics and priests on fire with the faith, and I wanted that. I served as a Chapel Rat for 2 years, which helped me get involved in the community and grow closer to the Lord since I lived in the church, and the chapel is always open.

I had many struggles with classes and personal issues in school, though. I'm a completely different person now than I was 5 years ago, thanks to the Lord above all, but His generosity was poured out from you through St. Al's. I'm unsure if I would be alive, let alone Catholic, if St. Al's didn't exist, and it only exists through your generosity. I'm very excited to work as the Development Director because I get to thank you personally for this gift and co-labor with you to bring the life-saving gospel of Jesus Christ to other students at Michigan Tech!



DANIEL RYAN
Development Director
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FAREWELL!

This year, we say farewell to Joe Rushlau and two of our FOCUS missionaries, Caleb and Rachel, as they embark on new chapters in their life. Thank you for your ministry!



JOE RUSHLAU

When Fr. Ben asked me to consider coming up to Houghton to be the Director of Development at St. Al's, I think God was calling me to step out into the deep; deeper friendships, deeper trust, but most importantly a deeper relationship with Him. What I found at St. Al's was a family of alumni, students, parents and friends. St Al's has a way of bringing people together through common experiences and a deepening faith and love of Jesus Christ. It is astonishing to witness so many college students coming to Mass and adoration instead of getting swallowed up by the secular culture around them. I have been honored to serve on this mission with you all these past 3 years. I've enjoyed the conversations as well as the growth and the commitment I have experienced and seen. Thank you for supporting me and more importantly supporting the mission of St Al's to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the students at Michigan Tech. God bless.

RACHEL SHERRY

During my time here, God showed me how much I struggle with perfectionism. I often try to find my identity in what I do, but through my mission the Lord purified and deepened my understanding of daughterhood. He continues to remind me of my true identity and the goodness of His Providence. My greatest joy (and biggest surprise!) on mission at St. Al's came through starting Greek outreach. I was intimidated to go on mission to our sororities, especially because I wasn't involved in Greek life during college, but becoming friends and sharing the Gospel with these women proved to be a life-giving and rewarding adventure! I'll miss the many adventures of St. Al's, but I'm excited for my next season of life! I will continue working for FOCUS as the Program Director for Sponsorships at SEEK. I'm also looking forward to bringing the gift of bible study and discipleship to my community in Minnesota, where I'll be moving after my fiancé Greg and I get married in October.



CALEB TAGGART

Through my time in FOCUS at St. Al's, I was shown that the Church is young and vibrant! There is much hope for the future of the Church through the faithful men and women who comprise the St. Al's community. One event that comes to mind is the Beloved Dinner! The graces were twofold: the men had the opportunity to intentionally serve the women of the community, while the women had the opportunity to receive the message that they are beloved. The Lord has taught me the importance of not expecting praise from people. We are called to serve our neighbor and expect nothing in return, but when we do receive thanks or praise, we rejoice! I am looking forward to discerning seminary as I leave my role with FOCUS. I am excited to see what the Lord has in store for me with this unpredictable path ahead, and I know the skills I acquired from FOCUS will translate to seminary!



WOMEN'S HEALTH & FAI

Thanks to the support of generous donors, Kylie Hoehn (*pictured, right, while instructing an engaged couple*), a 2010 Biomedical Engineering Michigan Tech alumna, is making this vision a reality by sharing with young women and couples the Creighton Model, a scientifically-backed method of Natural Family Planning (NFP) which can be used by single, engaged, and married women alike (and their fiancés/spouses!) Required by the St. Al's marriage prep program, over the past seven years, Kylie has walked with over 50 couples and 30 single women!

First introduced to the NFP method through a Theology of the Body class at St. Al's, Kylie became intrigued. "Theology of the Body began to put into words what was already in my mind and heart. It seemed so intuitive, it's written in our very bodies. Seeing how the science I was learning in my biomedical classes paired along with these teachings brought me great excitement!"

From introductory Friday Night Fireside talks and Bible study presentations to 1:1 instruction and an open-door policy, Kylie makes herself readily available to answer the questions of the women (and men!) of the community. Students and community members find a plethora of resources on NFP and relationships.

Looking at NFP from a relationship standpoint, Kylie's seen many couples grow deeper in relationship with one another. "NFP is a call to deeper virtue



in so many ways. One has to really develop self-mastery, and that helps with everything in a marriage. It helps couples be able to communicate better and to grow together. With engaged couples, I have the man keep the chart so that he learns just as much as his fiancée about what is going on in her body throughout the cycle. Learning to chart can be simple, but the relational side of using the method can be very difficult. It's an invitation as the best things in life come from hard work."

The testimonies on the following page show the real-life impact of NFP for our St. Al's students and graduates. You can also read more testimonies online at mtucatholic.org/blog.

If you'd like to contact Kylie, email kylie@mtucatholic.org. To get in touch with a Creighton instructor near you, visit fertilitycare.org/find-a-center.

Scan the QR code below to learn more about the Creighton Model or visit factsaboutfertility.org.



WHAT IS THE CREIGHTON MODEL?

The Creighton Model teaches women how to chart and track their cycles through the daily biomarker observations. Simple to learn, backed by science, and cost-effective, it is popular amongst the many scientifically-oriented women of St. Al's. When asked what she wished more people knew about NFP, Kylie replied, "That is exists. Keeping an eye on a women's cycle health is a really good metric of her overall health. It affects her cardiac health, brain, bone structure, bone density, and even how she processes fear and stress. Many times, health concerns in other parts of your body show up in your cycle before you see other symptoms. For example, high stress changes one's cycle. I can usually tell when exams weeks are at Michigan Tech as I can see it in women's charts."

TH Students have opportunity to learn Natural Family Planning through St. Al's donor-supported program



EVELYN

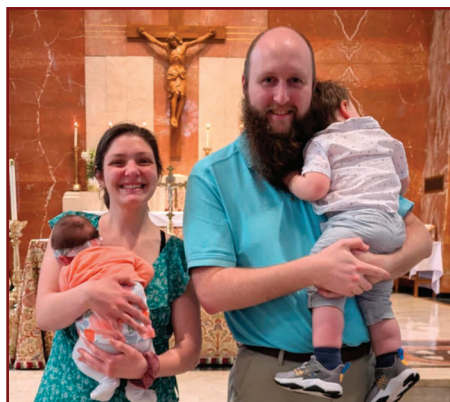
"I didn't even know what "healthy" felt like until I began NFP. I suffered from major mood swings, depression, anxiety, and cramps. I was referred to NFP when I confided in my priest. He directed me to a therapist, but told me I should try NFP, as my emotional turmoil reminded him of a previous parishioner who benefited from NFP. I decided to try both, and I realized that my awful emotions coincided with my luteal phase. I had always felt like I needed help, but only for a week or so each month, and then I felt "fine". I now finally had an answer as to why! I am so thankful that St. Al's provided NFP and made it affordable!"

Through tracking my cycle, I learned I had a hormone deficiency. Once I began to take the recommended medication, I felt like a whole and healthy woman for the first time in nearly a decade. I now have an understanding of my body and can share my experience with my girl friends. I have become more confident and trusting in myself, and it has brought me closer to God."



JILLIAN

"Not only did I find physical healing through NFP, I found an incredible and supportive community of women who experienced similar situations to myself that made me feel welcomed and validated. I encourage all women to start NFP and discover their true femininity."



MORGAN & MICKEY MOORE

"It was beautiful to have this system that sought to find the root cause of potential infertility instead of pushing medications that would cover up the actual issue. It was also dignifying, though challenging, to use this method to avoid pregnancy since we had to be intentional with each other in ways other than the typical physical ways of a married couple - through spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional ways that embrace the whole person."



THOMAS & ALLIE RIPPLINGER

"Practicing Natural Family Planning in our marriage has built a deep, abiding trust in God. In 2018, when we were engaged, Kylie Hoehn began her first NFP sessions at St. Al's. During the time, we were able to discover something Allie hadn't known — the physical symptoms she experienced were due to a progesterone deficiency. Allie began taking progesterone, which immediately improved her quality of life. When married, we continued Creighton charting and working with NaProTECHNOLOGY® trained physicians to address Allie's deficiency and maintain pregnancies. There were many times during our pregnancies that were scary, but having these doctors who knew how to correctly interpret hormone levels was a tremendous gift and witness of God's care for us. Now, six years into our marriage, He has blessed us with three beautiful girls, and we continue to rely on His plan for our fertility within our vocation, prayerfully and gratefully discerning when He is calling us to participate in the miracle of bringing new life into relationship with Him."

Greek Life Outreach at St. Al's

Thanks to your generosity, the mission to reach students for Christ at Michigan Tech is thriving! Sitting down with Zach Wurtenberger, a first year missionary from Kanas City, we learned more about the outreach he and Rachel Sherry, a second year missionary, are doing to reach Greek students on campus.

WHAT HAS THE LORD TAUGHT YOU ABOUT MISSION THIS FIRST YEAR?

The biggest thing I've learned about mission is that it does not hinge on me and my abilities. During my time in college, I had a pretty strong understanding of the culture and the area. Getting up to Michigan Tech, I thought it would be the same, and it was not. People live life very differently up here. Things I did at K-State, such as holding a tailgate before a football game, did not work in the same way. However, I've learned the Lord can still take me in my confusion about the culture and bring about great fruit.

WHAT LED YOU TO PURSUE GREEK MINISTRY?

When I was in college, I led a Bible study with a few guys from Theta Xi. They were very obviously seeking after something. All of our desires, at their very core, are good, but they can become skewed in different ways. For example, there are many different reasons to join Greek Life. One of them might be to have friends. You can have the stereotypical party scene often associated with Greek Life where they are searching to be seen or to find meaning in their life. This is core to the human person. This is something we can offer them [in a positive way] - deep, Christian friendship.

HOW MANY STUDENTS ARE INVOLVED IN GREEK LIFE ON CAMPUS?

About 10%. There are 12 fraternities and 7 sororities on campus. Currently, 42 of these men and women are involved in a St. Al's Bible study!

WHAT SIMILARITIES DO YOU SEE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC FAITH AND GREEK LIFE?

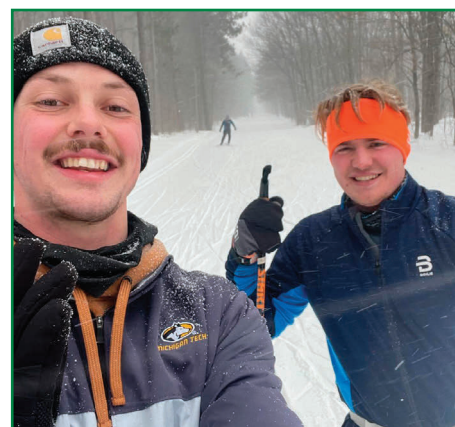
The Greek system is almost perfectly made for spiritual multiplication. For example, there is the big-little system- it's like a secular discipleship, a mentorship. I have a couple of guys leading Bible study in their houses now. They're already friends, and they now get to deepen and root those friendships beyond the letters on their shirts.

WHAT IS ONE OF THE GREATEST CHALLENGES OF GREEK LIFE BOTH AS A STUDENT AND AS A MISSIONARY TO THEM?

The first thing I think of is busyness. Being in a Greek house demands a certain amount of time. You have your chapter meetings, mandatory study and cleaning times, and some even require 40-hour/week spent on the ice statues. Most of them are also engineering students and so they are just swamped. The party scene is a factor on campus, but I think busyness makes it even harder to reorder their schedules and prioritize the faith.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO THE MOST FOR NEXT YEAR?

I'm really excited just to keep the ball rolling! We have a strong base of invested men and women who are building a strong Christian community in Greek Life. It's a beautiful thing to build off of, and I'm very excited to continue this outreach.





Farewell, Fr. Romeo

After two years of service at St. Al's and to Michigan Tech students, Fr. Romeo Cappella is leaving the St. Al's community. "I am very grateful for my stay here at St. Als," says Fr. Romeo, "I found St. Al's to be a very active community of young people. Frankly, I have never been a part of a community with so many young Catholics." When asked about his favorite memories and takeaways from his time here, he shared, "My favorite memories are exploring and hanging out with different friends throughout Houghton and the Keweenaw. I had so many fun adventures. I think the Lord has shown me the value in sharing experiences with others in Christ. In other words, I feel like I have grown to appreciate encountering the Lord with other people/friends in my life and enjoying time with them. Jesus says that it is better to give than to receive and I feel like that is the case for me. When I have given of myself in situations I find that it returns to me always multiplied." He began serving at All Saints Parish in Gladstone/Escanaba on July 1. "I am looking forward to my next assignment and what new lessons I will learn there. I want to thank everyone at St. Als for welcoming me and making me feel at home. I also ask for you to do the same for Father Prijo." Thank you Fr. Romeo for your service, we are praying for you and your new parish!





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WELCOME!

This year's OCIA group was the largest in at least 30 years with 18 people received the sacraments of initiation including 5 people baptized and confirmed, 8 non-Catholics received into full communion with the Church, and 5 Catholics receiving the sacrament of Confirmation.



Share your memories with us!
Send to: adriane@mtucatholic.org