



ST. ALBERT

WINTER 2026

the Great



PASTOR'S NOTE



Fr Ben
HASSE
benjhasse@yahoo.com

The snow has been falling steadily in the Copper Country, and as I type this, we have already made tremendous progress on the Ice Chapel as Winter Carnival approaches! It may well be our best Ice Chapel ever (#11). Register for the online broadcast of the Ice Masses here: mtucatholic.org/icemass



We just returned from SEEK26 in Columbus, OH, and it was an amazing conference. We had 200 people from the UP (MTU, NMU, and LSSU), our biggest group ever, and we were part of the biggest SEEK attendance ever, over 26,000 people!

Lots of exciting beautiful things are happening in our community as St. Al's continues to grow and impact more students, and to impact them more deeply. 2025 was a year full of weddings, with many St. Al's couples "tying the knot!" I had 5 weddings in just 22 days in October, and then three more in December!

As we are thrilled to see students entering the Sacrament of Marriage in a faith-filled way, we're also very excited to see them considering the priesthood and the many forms of consecrated life. We are amazed to report that 17 men have entered priestly formation from St. Al's since 2018! That's more vocations than were produced during that period by MANY whole dioceses in the US!

Thank you for supporting St. Al's both spiritually and financially! Your prayers and your gifts make this all possible and help us transform so many young men and women. God bless!

ON THE COVER:

Top: Our annual Procession of the Cross from St. Al's to the Church of the Resurrection in Hancock (about 3 miles away) gathered a large crowd.

Left: Students making great progress on this year's Ice Chapel!

Right: Some of the freshman class poses for a photo during the St. Al's Patronal Feast Dance.

THE SEEDS OF FAITH

"The Kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how." -Mk 4:26-27

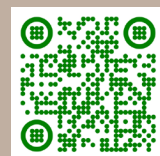
I often reflect on this passage when I cannot see the immediate fruits of my labor. My experience at SEEK reminded me that spiritual growth is the Holy Spirit's work; my role is simply to scatter the seeds God provides.

At St. Al's, YOU provide the seeds our community scatters through meals, dances, hikes, Bible studies, and the Sacraments. When students have open hearts, the Lord cultivates those seeds to change the world—whether that transformation happens in weeks or years after they leave.

This year's Pi Day Digital Gala theme, "The Power of Invitation," highlights the seeds planted during orientation week. Please join our watch party on Saturday, March 14th, at 6:30 pm EST to hear students' orientation testimonies. Register to virtually attend by scanning the QR code on the right or by visiting mtucatholic.org/gala.



DANIEL RYAN
Development Director
daniel@mtucatholic.org





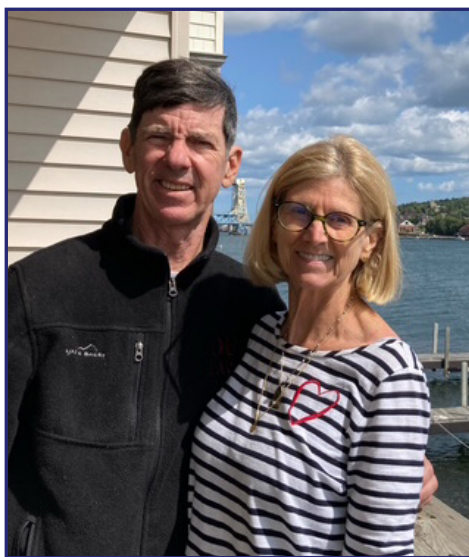
A SIGN OF GENEROSITY

Dancy Donation Helps St. Al's Expand Outreach, Mission

St. Al's was recently given a new sign with removable letters to display times for Mass, Adoration, St. Al's events, and even a fun haiku or two! This sign was made possible through the generous donation of Joe & Vickey Dancy.

Joe Dancy, a 1976 Michigan Tech alumnus, studied Material Science and Mineral Processing. He and Vickey moved back to the area in the fall of 2021 after retirement. However, the UP and St. Al's were a part of their lives well before then. "I didn't go up there [to St. Al's] when I was in college," shared Joe, "because I wasn't Catholic, but the guys I lived with would go up there on Sundays for service, and it always had a good reputation."

Vickey added, "Our daughter also went to school there after she graduated from high school back in 2008 so we were getting stuff from them [St. Al's]. Our son also attended the local hockey camps. Both



him and Joe would go to the UP for an entire month and loved it." Presently, Vickey teaches Business Law over in the College of Business while Joe is involved in a variety of local projects within the community.

After seeing the impact St. Al's was having on the students and the local community through attending Mass and the St. Al's summer cookouts, the Dancys knew they wanted to give back to St. Al's.

Realizing that they were most interested in enhancing the communications at St. Al's after a

conversation with Fr. Ben, the idea for the sign began to form. "The beautiful, wooden sign you had there was nice, but it was old, and it didn't necessarily convey all the information that you wanted it to." When asked why they gifted the sign to St. Al's in the first place, they shared, "St. Al's is a good asset for the community. They're doing some really good stuff."

BRINGING PEOPLE TO JESUS

This past June, St. Al's rejoiced in the ordination of our very own (and former head chapel rat) Fr. Daniel LaCroix. Serving now at St. John Vianney parish in Flint, Michigan, Fr. Daniel graciously shared with us a little more about his journey. Please pray for Fr. Daniel and all recently ordained priests!

CAN YOU GIVE US A BRIEF INTRO?

I was very involved at St. Al's during my time at Michigan Tech. I was also a chapel rat for 2.5 years. In 2018, I graduated with degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Material Science and Engineering.

WHAT LED YOU TO BEGIN TO PURSUE THE CALL TO THE PRIESTHOOD?

I don't remember what led me to consider it, but I remember when it was, the beginning of my third year. I think being involved in a faithful Catholic parish and living my faith, it was a reasonable question to ask, "What does God want for me, and which vocation is He calling me to?" Having Fr. Ben there as the Vocations Director was also helpful. I would talk with him occasionally and pray about this question. My home parish, Christ the King in Ann Arbor, has also seen a great increase

in vocations. There is no magic formula, technique, or preaching point. If you encourage people to be close to Jesus, they are going to figure out what He wants for them.

WHAT HAS BROUGHT YOU GREAT JOY?

Going over to the parish school and working with the kids is always fun. The kids are always excited and happy to have me come. Having more involvement at the school, in even casual things, gives me some credibility with the parish to help lead them closer to Christ in the sacraments. I've also done some ministry with college students in the area. In Flint, there are 3 campuses. There's a group that meets every week for an event similar to St. Al's fireside, but they didn't have a dedicated liturgical event. I've started doing weekly Adoration with them. In true St. Al's fashion, we have ice cream afterwards, and people remain at the Church for a long time. To be able to form these relationships and to bring Jesus to them are great joys.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO THE MOST AS YOU CONTINUE TO LIVE OUT THE PRIESTHOOD?

Bringing more people into relationship with Jesus.



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THOSE STILL DISCERNING THEIR VOCATION?

Stick with it, and be patient. It can take a while. Sometimes we want God to reveal His plans for us right now, but that's not the way He works. Stay close to Jesus, and stay close to other people who are striving for that. If you have the foundation of being close to God and trying to hear His voice in your daily life, you are more ready to hear His voice and follow His directions for your whole life.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE ST. AL'S MEMORY?

In general, Winter Carnival. The Ice Mass, the All-Nighter, and all the special events. Trying to put a religious element into the theme of our All-Nighter statue was also fun. I also enjoyed the hikes and other social outings. What was most impactful, of course, was the religious stuff. Adoration and the support of others also trying to live out their faith was memorable.



Photos courtesy of the Diocese of Lansing

Discerning God's Will

St. Al's Men Answer the Call to Discern the Priesthood

Since its beginning in 1963, St. Al's has had a plethora of vocations to the priesthood, but there has been a particular burst these past 7 years. Since 2018, 17 men have gone from the St. Al's community to enter the seminary and/or religious life. Three have discerned out of the priesthood. One of these men, Fr. Daniel LaCroix (MTU'18), was ordained in June 2025.

The journey to the priesthood, and all of the formation that goes along with it, is a journey in which one asks the vital question, "How is the Lord calling me to love and to serve?" For some, this is the priesthood. For others, it is the married life or the consecrated life as a religious brother or priest.

Today we ask you to pray for these young men currently in the process of seeking the Lord's will in the seminary or religious formation.



FR. DANIEL LACROIX
MTU'18

Ordained June 2025
Assigned to St. John
Vianney Catholic
Church in Flint, MI
Diocese of Lansing

A DIOCESE OF
MARQUETTE

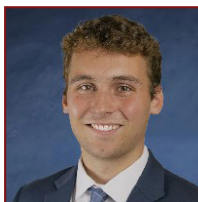


Charlie Tackman
MTU student 2020-21



James Domitrovich
MTU'23

B DIOCESE OF
GAYLORD



John Mawby
MTU'23

C DIOCESE OF
LANSING



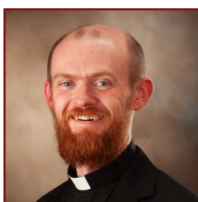
James Bonar
MTU'20

D DIOCESE OF
FORT WAYNE-
SOUTH BEND

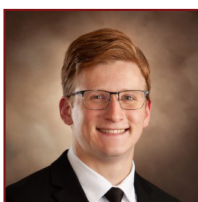


Matt Henry
St. Al's FOCUS Missionary
2021-2024

E DIOCESE OF
SUPERIOR

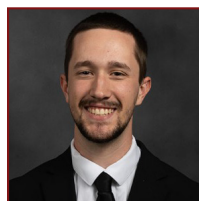


Scott Pederson
MTU '18



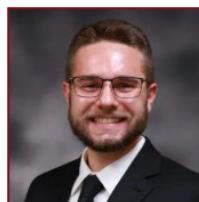
Jesse Larson
MTU student 2022-24

F DIOCESE OF
LA CROSSE



Caleb Taggart
St. Al's FOCUS Missionary
2023-25

G DIOCESE OF
GREEN BAY



Nathan Wolf
MTU'23

H DOMINICANS,
PROVINCE OF
ST. ALBERT THE
GREAT



Br. Benjamin Steary, OP
MTU'21

I OBLATES OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN
MARY



Zach Smith, OMV
MTU'20

J PRO ECCLESIA
SANCTA



John Kostick, PES
MTU'22

K JESUITS, MID-
WEST PROVINCE



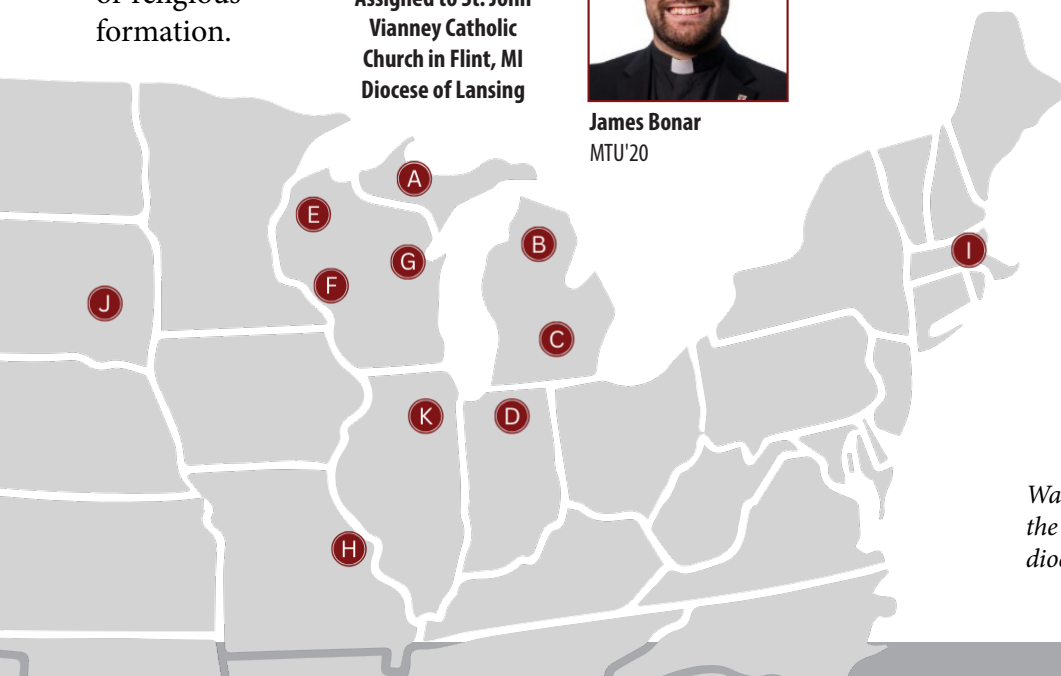
Brian Burtka, SJ
MTU'18



PLEASE PRAY

For these young men, for the two men from St. Al's in the process of applying for seminary, and for all of our young people at St. Al's as they pursue the Lord's will for their lives!

Want to learn more about Charlie, James, and the rest of our Yooper Seminarians? Visit:
dioceseofmarquette.org/yoopers-for-seminarians



Sing a New Song...



In St. Al's Renovated Choir Loft!

For a long time, St. Al's choir loft wasn't used for the choir, but for extra seating! Then, in 2011, Fr. Al Mott was able to move a historic pipe organ from St. Cecilia's Church in Hubbell, which closed in 2007. The instrument is a "tracker" organ and is entirely mechanical, although it does now have an electric blower. This Felgemaker organ was built and installed in a Lutheran church in Manitowoc, WI in 1882, and then moved to St. Cecilia's after 1905.

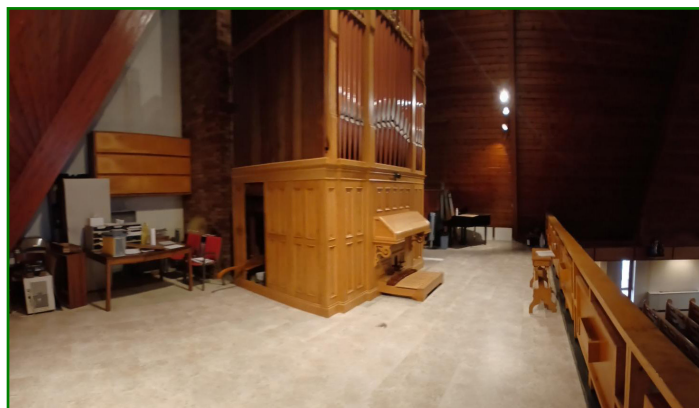
Moving this big mechanical organ into St. Al's choir loft involved some serious adjustment of the space, including removal of the seating furniture and "bleached" flooring. Although the organ has been in steady use now for almost 15 years, it's only now that the space is getting appropriately finished off.

Due to a recent, large, and unexpected, gift, the past few months have included a variety of construction projects up in the loft. Recent additions include new flooring, improved lighting, and a new (to us!) Yamaha U1 acoustic piano from Green Bay, Wisconsin. Construction will continue throughout this next semester with custom choir risers, storage shelves, and even a small music director's office.

Left: Student music leader, Emanuele Bagnasco, practices the organ.

Right: Our new piano!

Below: Updated LVT flooring in the choir loft.



ACHIEVING GOALS

Multiply the Mission Brings Music Director to St. Al's

“**T**he musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as a combination of sacred music and words, it forms a necessary or integral part of solemn liturgy (CCC 1156).” Music is at the core of the liturgy. It lifts the soul to praise and worship God. In 2013, then Bishop Alexander Sample (MTU grad '82, '84) released a pastoral letter on sacred music: “Rejoice in the Lord Always.” This was the beginning of the sacred music initiative which has been continued by our current bishop, Bishop John Doerfler.

One of the goals of the Multiply the Mission Campaign (2008-2024) was to expand the scope of music ministry at St. Al's. At the center of that effort was the hiring of a Music Director. Hired this past summer, Michigan Tech alumna Elsa Salo ('19, '21) is doing an amazing job as Director of Music & Sacred Liturgy. This role entails organizing the liturgical music at Mass alongside mentoring students who desire to participate in the music ministry. We recently sat down with Elsa to hear more about her and her vision for the ministry:

WHAT LED YOU TO ST. AL'S?

I first came to St. Al's in 2015 as a freshman at Michigan Tech going into Forestry. At that time, I did not know the organ. I just played the piano, and I had no experience playing for Mass. One



of my brothers was a professor at Tech, and he was heavily involved in the music ministry. He really roped me into getting started with the music ministry.

HOW DO YOU SEE MUSIC AS A PLACE OF ENCOUNTER WITH THE LORD?

For me, music has this ability to touch my soul in ways that other forms of art have not. I believe this is why music is such an integral part of Christian worship because it has the ability to speak to the heart and soul in ways in that spoken words or prayers cannot.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR MUSIC MINISTRY?

The whole purpose of music ministry is to lead the congregation in prayer. In addition to the priest, we are ministering to the people. Music is always growing and expanding, and the Church is continuing to grow in its understanding. We don't want to abandon the past nor do we want to ignore the future. I would like to expand on the sacred music repertoire as a means to share the richness of music in the Church, and I want to utilize what the Church has to offer to help reach a more diverse congregation.

HOW WOULD YOU SAY MUSIC MINISTRY HELPS SHAPE AND INFLUENCE STUDENTS?

Music is a form of prayer. It's a way to pray for one's self, but it is also an act of service to the community as you are providing music for the congregation. I hope to provide an environment of camaraderie and friendship where we are working and praying together. We want to equip the students to become music leaders so that when they graduate, they can become music leaders in whatever parish they become a part of post-graduation. This is what St. Al's did for me. I was in forestry, and St. Al's equipped me with skills that are now, even, turning into my career.

WHAT HAS THE EXPANSION OF MUSIC MINISTRY LOOKED LIKE SO FAR THIS SEMESTER, AND WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO FOR THIS NEXT SEMESTER?

This past semester was focused on building a stronger foundation. It focused a lot on recruitment and finding committed members. Part of the bigger vision is to establish a choir at St. Al's. Recently, there has not been a real choir at St. Al's. It's been individual singers who show up for the Mass they are scheduled to sing at. In order to learn new music well, you need to have a choir that meets regularly to work, grow, and challenge one another.

For this next semester, the vision is to continue to build off of this past semester. I'm really excited to build up the choir, encourage lessons, and to create beautiful music for the Triduum and the Easter liturgies.



ST. ALBERT THE GREAT UNIVERSITY PARISH

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Houghton, Michigan 49931-1198

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ST. AL'S π DAY

Digital Gala

The Power of Invitation

March 14, 2026 | 6:30 PM EST

Register for free at mtucatholic.org/gala

**Join us to celebrate St. Al's impact at Michigan
Tech & learn how you can join our mission!**

