

The Legacies of Pope Saint Paul VI

Next Sunday on October 14th during the synod for bishops on young people at the Vatican, Pope Francis will declare Pope Paul VI a saint of the Catholic Church. The following brief assessment of the papacy of Giovanni Montini, aka, Pope Paul VI was written in 2014 by David Gibson for the Religious News Service.

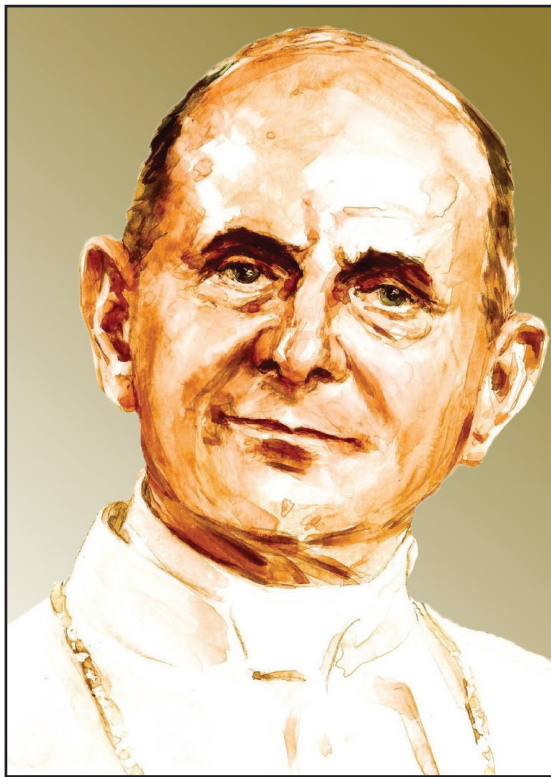
In 2014, as he wrapped up a Vatican meeting marked by sharp debates over sex and morality, Pope Francis announced that he would honor one of his most controversial predecessors by beatifying Pope Paul VI, who is most famous for reaffirming the Catholic Church's ban on artificial contraception. Now, four years later, on October 14th at the conclusion of the Synod on Youth, Pope Francis will proclaim Paul VI a saint. The move might seem out of step with Francis' pastoral approach given that Paul's birth control ruling, in the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, set the stage for the culture wars that overtook Catholicism after Paul died in 1978.

A wide swath of Catholics at that time, especially in the U.S. and Europe, were furious over Paul's encyclical. They were convinced that the ban would be lifted and that Paul was shutting down the reforms that had begun a few years earlier with momentous changes adopted by the Second Vatican Council. Many conservatives, on the other hand, hailed *Humanae Vitae* for reasserting traditional doctrine, and the division foreshadowed the deep splits that have played out even to this day—a polarization that Francis says he wants to overcome.

Yet Francis is trying to accomplish that goal by focusing not so much on *Humanae Vitae* but on Paul VI's many other groundbreaking, though often overlooked, contributions:

Reformer

Chief among them was Paul's call for a more missionary Church that would be open to the world and one that would dialogue with other Christians and other believers, and with nonbelievers, too. "For us, Paul VI was the great light," Francis said in an interview in June, referring to his years as a young priest.



In addition, like Francis, Paul was a vocal champion of the church's social justice teachings, and he sought to embed those concepts as foundation stones of Catholic doctrine. He also implemented a system of regular meetings of bishops, called synods, to promote a more collaborative, horizontal church. That's a legacy Francis built on when he convened a free-wheeling synod of bishops deliberately modeled on Paul's vision. "The 2014 synod, as it unfolded, is what Paul VI had in mind—a real debate among bishops," said Massimo Faggioli, an Italian-born theologian and church historian at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

An 'Evangelical' Pope

For Francis, the key to Paul's pontificate was his 1975 exhortation on evangelization, "*Evangelii Nuntian-di*," on proclaiming the gospel, which

Francis has called "the greatest pastoral document written to date." In that landmark document—largely overshadowed by the contraception encyclical—Paul said that the Church itself "has a constant need of being evangelized," and he wrote that people today listen "more willingly to witnesses than to teachers," so Catholic leaders above all must practice what they preach.

"The world calls for, and expects from us, simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially towards the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment and self-sacrifice. Without this mark of holiness, our word will have difficulty in touching the heart of modern man. It risks being vain and sterile," Paul wrote in words that could have come from the pen of Francis. In fact, in November of 2013, Francis sent a personal representative to a meeting of the U.S. bishops and had him read those passages to the hierarchy, followed by

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Name

Home Phone

Work Phone

Email Address

- ☐ I would simply like to learn more about the Catholic Faith.
- ☐ I desire to prepare for my Baptism into Christianity.
- ☐ I've been Baptized as a Christian and now desire to join in Catholic Communion.
- ☐ I'm non-Catholic, but married to a Catholic, and now wish to join the Catholic Church.
- ☐ I'm Catholic and I would like to complete my initiation into the Catholic Church by celebrating Confirmation and/or Communion.
- ☐ I'm Baptized Catholic and would like to learn more about my faith and how to practice it.
- ☐ I want to propose someone for Catholic Church membership and offer to serve as their sponsor.
- ☐ I would be willing to help with an R.C.I.A. program.
- ☐ I have other needs, requests, and questions. Please contact me.

Return this to the Parish Rectory or place it in the Collection basket.

THE LEGACIES OF POPE ST. PAUL VI

Continued from page 1

clear instructions that Francis, like Paul, “wants ‘pastoral’ bishops, not bishops who profess or follow a particular ideology.” Francis also asked all eight cardinals in his special advisory groups to reread “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*.”

Pilgrim Pope

Elected in 1963 following the death of St. John XXIII, amid intense debates among bishops at the Second Vatican Council, the former Cardinal Giovanni Montini inherited the difficult task of seeing the council through to its conclusion in 1965. In the following years, he pushed through the council’s changes, including updating the liturgy from Latin to the vernacular and completing a major reorganization of the Roman Curia.

He also discarded the papal triple tiara and other trappings of the monarchical papacy, sending a message “that the pope was not a king, but a bishop, a pastor, a servant,” as the website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops put it in one of its tributes.

And Paul — not his globe-trotting successor, John Paul II — was the original “pilgrim pope,” the first pontiff to travel outside Italy in the modern era. On his first trip, Paul met the Eastern Orthodox patriarch in Jerusalem in 1964, and during Paul’s eight other foreign journeys he visited Asia (where a knife-wielding artist in the Philippines tried to stab him), Africa, and Latin America. In 1965, Paul became the first pope to visit the U.S., where he celebrated Mass at Yankee Stadium and delivered a ringing denunciation of war to the United Nations General Assembly.

His calls for economic justice were just as powerful, and controversial. Because of that track record, Paul was a hero not only to Francis but to many other priests of the time who went on to become Church leaders. “Pope Paul helped me to understand that you don’t need to be a brilliant theologian, a charismatic speaker or have the courage of a martyr to evangelize,” said Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany, who until his recent retirement was the last bishop heading a U.S. diocese to be appointed by Paul.

Bridge Builder

But Paul is also returning as a hero for many in the newer generation. Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of the Philippines, a rising star in the global church, has praised Paul for his efforts to unify the church, citing Paul’s motto: “No one defeated; everyone convinced.”

Yet, as Tagle told Catholic News Service, because of that approach Paul “would be attacked from all sides” and “would never become a star the way the other popes were.” Indeed, critiqued by the left over birth control and by the right for reforms to the liturgy, Paul in his last years was depicted as a Hamlet-like figure of equivocation. His end did seem tragic, as he aged rapidly under the burdens of the office, governing the church at a time of massive social upheavals abroad and close to home.

In the spring of 1978, a longtime friend of Paul’s and a prominent Italian political leader, Aldo Moro, was kidnapped and executed by left-wing terrorists in Italy despite an impassioned appeal by the anguished pope. Paul died three months later, “one of the holiest and most loving of popes” but also “one of the saddest,” as the editors of the Catholic magazine *Commonweal* wrote at the time.

Will Francis wind up achieving what Paul could not by healing divisions and pushing the church forward? Or will he suffer a similar fate? Despite the many affinities between the two popes, Faggioli said that “the difference between Paul and Francis is the kind of boldness, courage—in a way, recklessness—that Francis clearly has. He’s taking huge risks, while Paul VI was always much more cautious.”

All Things Considered

With the return of our choir for the season, it's a great time to recognize the gifted individual who heads our music ministry here at St. Ambrose: **Dr. Norah Duncan IV**. My friendship with Dr. Duncan goes back to my work on the Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Renovation project. When after almost 30 years he left the services of the Cathedral to pursue the work of department chair of the Music School at Wayne State, he was the longest serving Roman Catholic Cathedral Music Director in the country.

No matter how many responsibilities and honors have come Norah's way over the years, he still remains a "pastoral musician" at heart. We are privileged to have him with us here at St. Ambrose. We truly have one of the best in the nation.

Confirmation of that comes this month in an article in the **GIA Quarterly** – the Gregorian Institute of American – is a highly respected journal in the Church music world. In the latest issue, **Emmett Price III**, a professor of Worship, Church and Culture at Gordon-Conwell Seminary writes about the musical genius of Detroit. He relates how Detroit has been the training ground for a host of exceptional blues, jazz and R&B innovators – particularly in the diverse, versatile and expansive repertoire of black sacred music. He notes: "The sacred sounds of Detroit have passed from generation to generation. Although much of the training and learning happens in real time on the stages, choir lofts, performance venues and church platforms, there are a number of phenomenal educators grounded in the rich traditions who are inspiring, encouraging and empowering the next generation. Norah Duncan IV is one such educator."

"A native Detroit, Duncan in an internationally recognized organist, choral director, and music director. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Detroit, MFA in organ performance from Wayne State and DMA in church music and organ performance from the University of Michigan. Beyond his academic work, Duncan, a widely celebrated liturgical musician has served as music director for the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament for close to three decades. In 1987, Duncan served as director of music for Pope John Paul II's historic visit to Detroit.

In reviewing Dr. Duncan's latest arrangement, a piece entitled "Hold On", Price says: "The entire work displays Duncan's brilliantly beautiful writing for voice. Grounded in a diatonic approach with deliberate chromatic coloring really amplifies the text, which is the goal for an a cappella arrangement. The maestro clearly has a grasp of the importance of vocal range, desired timbre and the value of well-prepared cadences. Beyond a terrific arrangement for performing or experiencing as a listener, it is equally a wonderful case study in clever choral writing. The score is intricate, detailed and exactly what any conductor with a great choir would look for to provide a meaningful music experience."

Here at St. Ambrose, you have the ability to sing with a great American Master Musician. Take advantage of the treasure we have by joining our choir and/or picking up your song sheet and raising your voice to God.

Our city, neighborhood and parish are undergoing remarkable transformations. To help us appreciate and understand those changes, our Motor City Makeover Series brings knowledgeable speakers to St. Ambrose for you to learn first-hand what's going on. This weekend, we get to hear **Marc Pasco** who serves as the director of communications for the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. He is responsible for all public relations, marketing, advertising and communications activities for the nonprofit. Prior to that, Pasco worked at Hermanoff Public Relations, Campbell & Company, Cranbrook Educational Community and the Kalamazoo County Convention & Visitors Bureau. Pasco began working with the Conservancy in 2012 and has 26 years of experience in the public relations field.

The program takes place after the 8:30 mass and ends just before the 11:15 mass. We'll have coffee and bagels. While you're waiting for your kids in Sunday School, drop over at the ARK.

TRP

Motor City Makeover

Metropolitan Detroit is rapidly being made over in ways that will define its future. We've invited persons knowledgeable in the field of Detroit's makeover to talk with us. Hear their visions of the 'City to come.'

These sessions are Sundays from 9:45 until 11 a.m. in the ARK

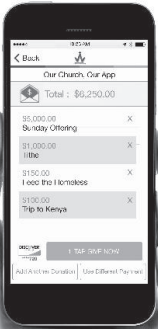
October 7 – Reclaiming the River – Mark Pasco from the Riverfront Conservancy will be here with lots of great images to show and exciting news about the changes happening along River Walk, including a new park on the west riverfront.

October 14 – Bedrock Reaches for the Stars – Melissa Dittmer, head of architecture for Dan Gilbert's real estate arm of Bedrock, will be here to talk about a project that will forever change the skyline and image of Detroit.

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Sweetest Day Dinner

On Saturday, October 20th, treat your spouse to a fun-filled dinner date night out with your fellow young married peers. Have a hilarious time playing “The Not So Newlywed Game”. The night will include a gourmet dinner, open bar, live entertainment, and dancing to cap off the evening. The event runs from 6:00 PM – 9:30 PM at St. Fabian Parish in Farmington Hills, MI. The cost per couple is \$50. To register, go to youngmarrieds_oct20.eventbrite.com or call 313-237-5894.

Journey of Hope

The rescue mission that started with Moses comes to us today. God mandated Moses to rescue the Israelites from the slavery of Pharaoh. God also commissioned His Son Jesus to rescue and redeem humanity. So the journey of hope through a rescue mission continues to move on. A man drove into the Capuchin Soup Kitchen (CSK) parking lot and asked his girlfriend to unload all her luggage and pushed her out of his vehicle. Two Soup Kitchen security guards quickly showed up on the scene while they were both yelling at each other. The story unfolded that the guy was originally from Detroit but he relocated to Texas where he found his girlfriend. Staying together here in Detroit was unpleasant . . . to the point that she felt tortured. Before it got worse, he ended up dropping her at the CSK and left her stranded because she didn’t know anybody here in Detroit. The security guards brought the poor woman into the Soup Kitchen. She was in bad shape, and the CSK staff provided her with a shower, clothes change and food to eat.

This was a real, contemporary rescue mission because this woman was quite vulnerable under the circumstances, and it called for the attention and concern of the staff. It also created a dilemma for the CSK. The staff immediately summoned an emergency meeting in which I was also invited to share my thoughts. Female staff learned that the lady in question was new to the city, but now would love to return back to Texas. So we came up with two possible plans to get this woman back to Texas. Plan A was to put her in a shelter and let the whole situation settle down somewhat. But based on our brief encounter with the man, we decided on plan B: that is to get her a Greyhound bus ticket to Texas. We all felt that this man was a scam artist, so getting her the bus ticket seemed the best option. So a female staff member and I drove her to the Greyhound bus station, bought the ticket, and held onto the receipt. We accompanied her to the bus and gave her some cash for snacks before we left her.

Interestingly, before she boarded the bus she asked for prayers; we prayed with her for a safe journey and for God’s mercy. On our return to CSK the staff and I thanked God for the surprise. And so we should always be ready and available for God’s “surprise missions”! We were all overjoyed as we acclaimed: our first missionary journey is accomplished! This was an emotional experience and yet we stepped into this woman’s shoes. This shocking incident was a profound experiential encounter that I have now stored in my pastoral “tool box.” We see similar situations like this lady’s around us daily. Then what? As Christ’s rescue mission team, we are invited to be always ready to help those in danger with a merciful, compassionate, loving kindness as we engage in unforeseen circumstances. I deeply appreciate all the staff for including me in this opportunity to be God’s rescue instrument of hope.

Dn. Anthony Kote-Witah, OFM Cap.

St. Ambrose Liturgical Choir

... under the direction of Norah Duncan, IV ... holds rehearsals on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. New members are always welcome. Interested volunteers who would like to sing for the Christmas holidays but cannot commit to the entire year are especially welcomed at this time.

For more information, contact Dr. Duncan through the parish office at stambrose@comcast.net or climb up to the loft before or after Sunday’s masses.

Faith Formation Station

O – Open your home in hospitality. C – Curb criticism. T – Try to have dinner together. O – Observe the Sabbath as a day of rest. B – Bless our children nightly. E – Encourage one another. R – Recognize your family's strengths.

From its earliest beginnings, the Church has held Mary, the mother of Jesus, in great esteem. October is often devoted to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and referred to as the Month of the Rosary. During this month, we honor Mary in prayers and rituals for the very special role she played in the history of our salvation. One way Catholics show their devotion to Mary is by inviting her to pray with and for them using the Rosary and thinking about the events in her life and the life of her son.

Your family can make the home-to-Religious-Education connection by setting aside some time during this month to pray the Rosary together. It is a wonderful time to teach younger children this beautiful Catholic tradition. Take the time to talk with your child/ren about Mary. Recall Mary's deep faith, her willingness to love and care for her Child, and her unfailing fidelity to her Son's mission. Mary knows what our daily lives are like and loves us very much.

All of the students in our program received a rosary last year along with a family how-to guide. Your child/ren will also be praying the Rosary in class this month. If you would like additional rosaries or resources, please let us know.

HISTORY OF THE ROSARY: Long ago, people living in the desert or in monasteries used pebbles, sticks, or lines drawn in the sand to count their prayers. Herein lies the early roots of the Catholic Rosary. People progressed to counting knots on a cord, then to the beads we know today.

At one time, monks prayed the Our Father 72 times, keeping count with 72 beads. Because the Hebrew practice of praying 150 psalms in the temple continued in Christian monasteries, the practice of praying 150 beads gradually evolved. Educated priests and monks could read and pray the psalms from books. The large majority of people who could not read, were able to count their prayers and devotions with beads.

In their use of pebbles to count prayers, the early desert monks started the Church on a great tradition. It allows people of all ages to meditate on faith while comforting beads, kind to the senses, pass through the fingers. Every word of the rosary is kind to our senses. A rosary is a place where roses grow, a garden, a place of fragrance and beauty. Prayer takes us to a beautiful place inside ourselves, even better than a rose garden. Praying the Rosary often brings a sense of quiet and peace that helps people to reflect on the mysteries of the rosary. It is important to remember, however, that the Rosary is more than just a repetition of prayers. It is an invitation for us to meditate on the mysteries – events that form the foundation of our faith. It relates to the ancient Christian prayer practice called *lectio, meditatio, and oratio* -- Latin words for "read," "think about," and "talk or listen to God in prayer."

PROGRAM REMINDERS:

Communication: Monthly family emails will be sent out to the main contact email indicated on your registration form. Please be sure to read this month's email with important program dates and reminders. Feel free to contact the Religious Education Office directly with any questions, concerns, or ideas you may have throughout the year. Contact Kelly Woolums at the new Rel. Ed. phone number: (313) 332-5633 or reled.stambrose@comcast.net.

First Reconciliation & Communion Parent Meeting – October 24, 2018 7:00-8:30PM in the ARK: Please join us for an introductory meeting for parents of children preparing for these sacraments this year. This meeting will be an evening of prayer, reflection, programming review, and an overview of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. At least one parent is expected to attend.

Kelly Woolums

2	0	CSA
1	8	Box Scores

Number of Families	900
Returns to date	263
Average Gift ('17).....	\$440
Quota for the Archdiocese	\$87,418
Property/Liability Insurance ...	\$52,000
Parish '18 Target.....	\$139,418
Received as of 10/3/2018.....	\$122,662

• With the Archdiocesan quota now satisfied, we are in a position to do our own parish some good. Everything donated to the CSA from this point onward will be applied to our property/liability insurance at 100%. No Archdiocesan 7% tax will be assessed. So far we are able to fund our premiums for 34 weeks.



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The Beehive

is the parish weekly bulletin of the
St. Ambrose Catholic Community
Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

Pastor: Rev. Timothy R. Pelc

Assistant: Dn. Anthony Kote-Witah, OFM, Cap

Pastoral Minister: Charles Dropiewski

Religious Education: Kelly Anne Woolums

Minister of Music: Dr. Norah Duncan IV

Office Manager: Peggy O'Connor

Sacramental Celebrations

Masses: On the Lord's Day –

Saturday Vigil - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday - 8:30 and 11:15 a.m.

Baptism: Arrangements for both adults and infants to be made by contacting the rectory.

Penance: As announced and by appointment.

Marriage: Couples should contact the rectory office a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed date to make arrangements.

Funeral: Normally celebrated within one week after the deceased's passing.

Directory

Parish Office: 15020 Hampton

Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan 48230

Tel: (313) 822-2814 **Fax:** (313) 822-9838

Email address: stambrose@comcast.net

Religious Education: (313) 332-5633

Pastoral Ministry: (313) 332-5631

Ark Scheduling: (313) 822-2814

Parish Website: stambrosechurch.net

Liturgy Schedule for the Coming Week

Monday, October 8

8:30 - Morning Prayer

Tuesday, October 9

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Charles Kazul

Stanley and Marie Schoch

Wednesday, October 10

8:30 a.m. - Morning Prayer

Thursday, October 11

8:30 - Mass - Larry Conlan

Peter and Patrina Leto, Norma Thompson

Friday, October 12

8:30 a.m. - Mass - Kathering Herbold

4:00 p.m. - Wedding -

Tammy Walker & John Lauer

Saturday, October 13

4:00 p.m. - Mass - For All People

Sunday, October 14

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

8:30 a.m. - For All People

11:15 a.m. - For All People

Vincentian Reflection

Today's Gospel has Jesus telling his disciples, "Let the children come to me... for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." This week please help the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to bring the love and mercy of Jesus to children who are hungry and cold and worried.

Scriptures for the 27th Week of Ordinary Time

Monday, October 8

- Gal 1: 6-12
- Ps 128: 1-6
- Lk 10: 25-37

Tuesday, October 9

- Gal 1: 13-24
- Ps 139: 1-3, 13-15
- Lk 10: 38-42

Wednesday, October 10

- Gal 2: 1-2, 7-14
- Ps 117: 1-2
- Lk 11: 1-4

Thursday, October 11

- Gal 3: 1-5
- (Ps) Lk 1: 69-75
- Lk 11: 5-13

Friday, October 12

- Gal 3: 7-14
- Ps 111: 1-6
- Lk 11: 15-26

Saturday, October 13

- Gal 3: 22-29
- Ps 105: 2-7
- Lk 11: 27-28

Sunday, October 14

- Wis 7: 7-11
- Heb 4: 12-13
- Mk 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 13th and October 14th

4:00 p.m. – Saturday – Celebrant: Fr. Bede Lector: Cathy McPherson

Eucharistic Ministers: Adam Borkowski, Della Cimini, Matthew Strong

Altar Servers: Andrew & Joseph Strong

8:30 a.m. – Sunday – Celebrant: Fr. Pelc Lector: Karlos Haynes

Eucharistic Ministers: Colleen Drummond, Christopher Harrison, Colleen Jogan, Bob Jogan, Steve Linne, Joellyn Valgoi, Chris Walsh

Altar Servers: Nicholas, Margaret, & Meredith Kramer

11:15 a.m. - Celebrant: Fr. Bede Lector: Kurt Vatalaro

Eucharistic Ministers: Thomas Bennert, Anne Billiu, Doris Fleming, Joseph Hugh, Sue & Roger Playwin, Darryl Swiatkowski

Altar Servers: Shea Vatalaro, April Caballero

Your Envelope Speaks ... the Inside Story

To operate, each week our parish requires a *minimum* of..... \$10,100.00

On Sunday, September 30, 2018

in envelopes we received \$6,395.00

in the loose collection \$393.00

in electronic donations \$1,390.00

Givelify..... \$500.00

for a total of..... **\$8,678.00**

Under budget for the week..... **\$1,422.00**

Number of envelopes mailed 900

Number of envelopes used..... 125

"Whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name." GENESIS 2:19

The creation story reminds us of two important points. First, since the start, God has put the entire world into our care. Second, stewardship has been around since the beginning of mankind, it isn't something recently invented by the Church. Just as past generations built our Church, it is now our responsibility to continue to develop these gifts for future generations.

Our Sick

Please pray for those who are seriously ill or who are hospitalized: Pat Blake, Maria Chinchilla, Karen Culver, Ann Sullivan Kay, Donald Miriani, Bonnie McKenna, Jeanne Noto, David Schumacker, Matthew Elias, George Bucec, Emilie Kasper, Arthur Stoyshin, Anna Noto Billings, Vilma Rivers, Vilma Marone, Eileen O'Brien, Martha Luna, Dan Urbiel, Dina Engels, Liz Linne, Donna Barnes, Betty Greenia, Alexandra Cullen, Charmaine Kaptur, Darby O'Toole, Frank Gregory, Josephine DeCastris, Alex Billiu Albina Checki and Gladys Bogos.

Basketball Tune Up

Clare Conway and others will be conducting a Basketball Tune Up Camp which will focus on the fundamentals of the game. It takes place from October 9th through 26th at the St. Clare of Montefalco Gym.

The cost for camp is \$30 per child with cash or checks made out to St. Clare Athletics.

This camp is open to all students grades four through 8 – not just St. Clare School or St. Clare & St. Ambrose Religious Education Students. For the schedule of specific days and times for each grade level, email cmconway32@gmail.com.

Mass for Commerce

The Catholic business and professional community are invited to the 25th Annual Mass for Commerce on Wednesday, October 18th, at 8 a.m. in the Chapel of Sacred Heart Seminary, 2701 Chicago Blvd., Detroit.

The Eucharist reminds us that we are not just business and professional people who happen to be Catholic, but people who recognize they are stewards of God's gifts and their need for the Holy Spirit to be with them, guiding them every day.

A breakfast will follow Mass. Fr. Tim Hipskind, S.J., author of *What's Your Decision? How to Make Choices with Confidence and Clarity*, will sign free copies of his book and answer questions at the breakfast. Call (313) 596-7430 or visit massforcommerce.org

October is Respect for Life Month: The Perfect Gift

Our son Charlie [not his real name] was born with Down syndrome. My training as a developmental psychologist had focused on the deficits faced by people with disabilities and how to deal with those challenges. But I soon found that it was of limited use for understanding my own son. He certainly has challenges that come with his diagnosis, but they make up only a small part of life with our wonderful little boy.

Soon after Charlie's birth, a visitor to our home asked, "So, is he mild, moderate, or severe?" She was referring to his level of cognitive impairment. I was very familiar with her terminology, but the question shocked me. In my arms I held my beautiful baby boy, who defied easy categorization. Clinical labels may describe some aspects of an individual's "functioning," but they don't tell the whole story. Labels could not describe how Charlie's smile lit up a room or how the sweetness of his soul had captured our hearts so completely.

I have since come to understand that clinical categories also miss another important dimension of personhood: we are created to be in relationship with others. As Pope Saint John Paul II said in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life), "Within the family each member is accepted, respected and honoured precisely because he or she is a person; and if any family member is in greater need, the care which he or she receives is all the more intense and attentive." Seen through this more complete lens, Charlie is very "high functioning" within our family.

He does well because we love him and attend to him out of that love. We make accommodations to compensate for the challenges that arise, with the result that his strengths become more apparent. He plays an integral role in our family's happiness. For example, he is our most empathetic child — the first one to notice when we are hurt and the first to offer comfort.

People often say, "I could never handle a child with a disability." The beauty of parenting, I tell them, is that you aren't given a child with a disability. You are given your child with a disability. Your child enters the world in a relationship with you, and that relationship changes everything. You are not called to "handle" a disability. You are called to love a particular person, and caring for him or her grows out of that love.

I once read an article in which a woman discussed the reasons for aborting her child with Down syndrome. The deal-breaker for her was watching a boy with Down syndrome at a restaurant with his mother and father. They had to hand-feed him a slice of pizza, she said, and wipe his face with a napkin.

This hit home for me. We are now weaning my seven-year-old Charlie off a feeding tube. Although he's making progress, we still spoon-feed him and often wipe his face afterwards. I wonder how many people have watched us feed-

ing him in public and decided a life like his isn't worth living. But if anyone were to ask, I would say, "It might look a little crazy from the outside, but he's an amazing little boy, and it's a good life."

It's like looking at a stained-glass window from the outside: The colors look dark, and you can't quite make out the figures. From the inside, however, with the sun shining through it, the effect can be brilliant. From inside our family, love illuminates our life with Charlie. What may seem dreary to others, perhaps even unbearable, is actually filled with beauty and color. We know, for instance, that Charlie has worked hard to gain basic feeding skills that most people take for granted, and we are so proud of his valiant efforts.

Many parents want perfect children. Our culture is obsessed with perfection—a superficial perfection. Photos are airbrushed, and social media sites depict seemingly perfect lives. God calls us to seek perfection, too. He does not call us, however, to perfection of appearance or abilities, but to perfection in love.

Christians know what perfect love looks like—Jesus offering himself on the Cross. Love in a family where one member has a serious disability may look unappealing from the outside. Indeed, love in any family is messy; there are faces to wipe and sacrifices to make. It's natural to fear that such sacrifices will require too much. But this is where the deep mystery of sacrificial love becomes apparent.

In our family we have found that our hearts, rather than being weighed down, have become larger. Caring for Charlie has given us more patience, more compassion, and more love for others — especially those on the outskirts of society, whom Pope Francis so often calls us to care for.

Perhaps this is why so many families of children with disabilities, despite difficulties, often radiate joy. When I meet another parent of a child with Down syndrome, there is usually a moment of instant recognition and understanding. Our eyes meet, and we smile conspiratorially, as if we're in on the same secret.

The secret we share is the fundamental truth of our existence: every life is a good and perfect gift. Many know this on an intellectual level, but those who love someone with a disability see it in their loved one's face in a particular way. Our love for them has nothing to do with what they can or can't do. We love them simply because of who they are. Understanding this teaches us how to truly love everyone, whether they have a disability or not. We also begin to understand our own worth, which depends not on our skills or appearance, but solely on the fact that we are persons created in the image and likeness of God. Our lives — all our lives — are worth living.

From the NCCB Respect Life Materials 2018. The author has a Ph.D. in developmental psychology and has been advocating for children who are prenatally diagnosed with disabilities. She and her husband are the proud parents of five children.