

SPRING 2023

# DISCIPLE

A PUBLICATION OF ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH & SCHOOL



**ANSWERING THE CALL TO  
CONVERSION AND CHARITY**

# Living Out Our Faith



In January, Father Brian Park led a mission trip to the Mustard Seed Community in the Dominican Republic. On the cover, Emma Thorp enjoys the company of a young girl who lives at Mustard Seed. Check out more photos on page 8 of this issue of DISCIPLE!

Each year at the beginning of Lent, we hear of the temptation of Jesus in the desert. The devil knows who God is. He knows Jesus and sacred scripture—in fact, he uses scripture in his temptations. Among other things, this story should teach us that simply knowing about Jesus and the Bible is not enough. We need to live our faith.

For 21st century Catholics, learning about our faith has never been easier. We are more educated and better informed, with ready access to Church teachings and leaders, and 2,000+ years of history, theology, and saints on which to lean.

In addition, Minnesota is home to some of the best Catholic evangelists and teachers around, including Bishop Robert Barron, Father Mike Schmitz, and Jeff Cavins. If you desire to learn more about the Catholic faith and don't know where to look for answers or resources, please, reach out to us at the church. We are happy to help!

But as I said, knowledge is not enough. If we believe in God but put other things ahead of Him; if we hope in His loving plan for us but refuse to do His will; if we claim to love Him but neglect to love our neighbor—i.e., if we are not living out our faith—then we are not doing what we have been called to do.

Fortunately, the season of Lent provides an antidote. In the weeks before Easter we practice prayer, fasting, and almsgiving more intentionally, denying our own desires and devoting ourselves not just to the knowledge of our faith, but to its practice. In big and small ways, we strive to strengthen our wills, die to ourselves, and live for others—like Jesus did.

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, “To love God is something greater than to know Him.” Studying our faith is essential, because it is difficult to love someone you do *not* know. But putting that knowledge into practice is the goal of Christian discipleship, because it is the first step toward repentance, conversion, and holiness.

May this Spring issue of DISCIPLE inspire you to learn more about God, love Him more, and follow Him more closely each day.

God bless you!

**Father Brian Park**  
Pastor

# AS PROMISED: Barthel clan delivers on Kerry's commitment

The unexpected passing of Kerry Barthel last October devastated his family and left a hole in our parish that is impossible to fill. Kerry's ready smile was a familiar sight even to those who didn't know him well—but his good humor, humility, and genuine love of others is what really drew people to him.

Not to mention his servant's heart: Whatever was asked, he was there—especially if there was painting to be done. So when Father Brian Park shared the plan to beautify the worship space of St. Michael Catholic Church, Kerry was quick to step forward.

"Painting was his vocation," recalls his wife, Kathy Jo. "He figured that out a long time ago. Painting is what God called him to do, to provide for his family, to help others, and to serve the church and community."

Kerry promised to donate his time and expertise to strip and paint the walls of the statuary apse and repaint the four wings where the Stations of the Cross are displayed. He also planned to paint the interior of the newly expanded Options for Women | Cornerstone, our local pro-life pregnancy center.

Even in their grief, his family kept these commitments in mind, asking for donations to Cornerstone in lieu of funeral flowers and promising donations to help cover the church painting.

Ultimately, they stepped up to do the church project themselves—and even added the choir apse to the mix. Kerry's brother Tim took the lead, recruiting family members and employees from Kerry's company, KJ's Painting, to remove several inches of acoustic foam from the statuary walls, then scrape, clean, mask, and paint. They worked Saturdays, around their own schedules and that of the Conrad Schmitt crew doing the detailed artwork in the church.

Tim is not a painter by trade, but does have professional experience: He was Kerry's first employee in college.

"The key people doing the painting are my brother Keith, our nephew Joe Eicher, and others who worked for Kerry, like Jack Dwinnell and Aivary Bouman," says Tim. "Aivary has been instrumental. She is a talented painter and has done a lot of the challenging ladder work. She doesn't belong to our church, but knowing that this was important to Kerry, she volunteered to assist on her own time."

Keith has been Kerry's primary employee for more than 20 years, and his skill and experience were essential to the family's efforts to deliver on Kerry's commitment. Aivary has worked with KJ's since 2020.



**Top: Kathy Jo and Kerry Barthel with Charlotte, one of their seven grandchildren. Bottom: Kerry's brother Tim Barthel at his day job with Cybertrol Engineering. Photos courtesy of the Barthel family.**

"I knew Kerry for many years before I started to work with him," she says. "Even within the first few months, the painting crew felt more like family than coworkers. He and Keith felt like uncles to me almost immediately."

"Kerry's outlook on life was inspiring, and I strive to be as involved with the things I care about as he was. This project seemed like a perfect opportunity for me to feel closer to him and the things he cherished, and to help the community."

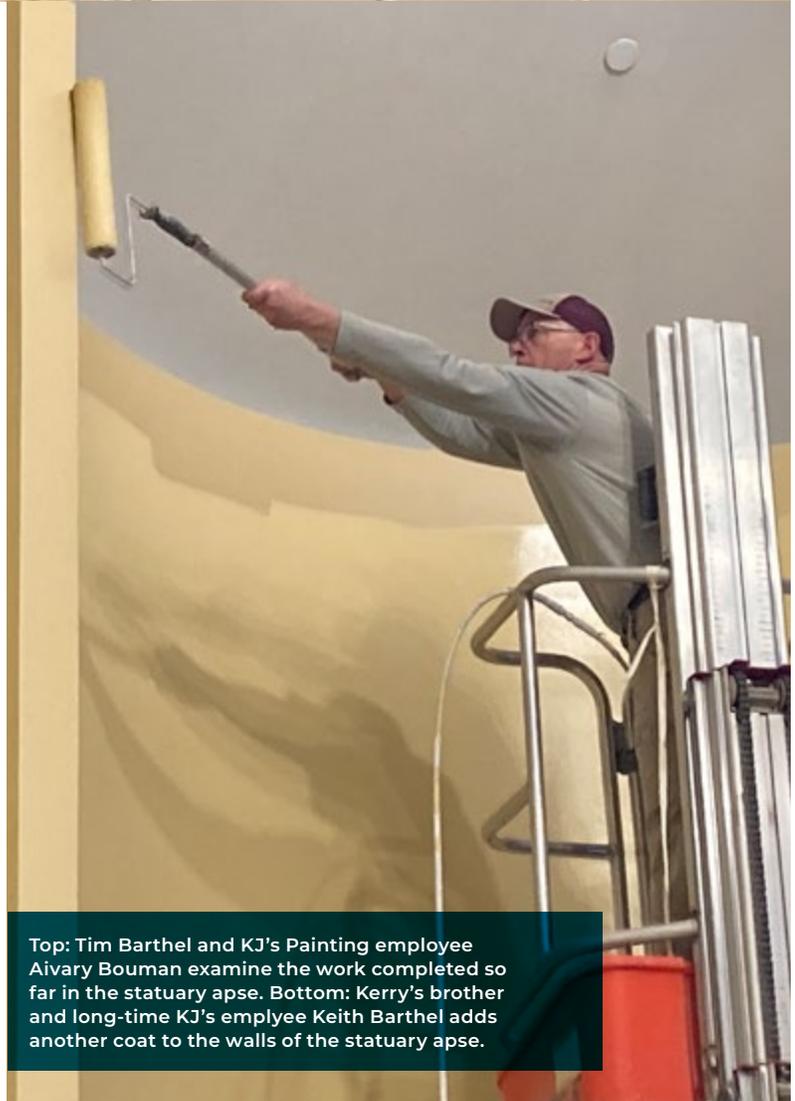


“When people heard, they wanted to help,” Tim says. “For the first part—scraping the statuary apse—I recruited nieces and nephews. Some of the younger ones needed community service hours. There are 75 people my parents are responsible for, so I figured I could get some volunteers.”

His parents, Duane and Kathy, brought coffee to the workers on busy mornings, and family friends have stopped by to lend a hand as well.

“Our ties to the church go back to the beginning of St. Michael—this community is our center,” says Tim. “Kerry asked me a while back if I would help. I wasn’t expecting to take the lead, but I’m proud to do so. And I’m thankful for the support that Father and Dave Ferry have given to me, knowing that my primary job is not as a painter.”

“This family, for generations, has volunteered for the church to glorify God, and that’s what Kerry wanted to do,” says Kathy Jo. “He loved to paint, and we are so blessed to be here. It brings such comfort and peace to know people are praying for us—that’s how we’re getting through right now.”



Top: Tim Barthel and KJ’s Painting employee Aivary Bouman examine the work completed so far in the statuary apse. Bottom: Kerry’s brother and long-time KJ’s employee Keith Barthel adds another coat to the walls of the statuary apse.

# VISIONS OF HEAVEN

## Conrad Schmitt brings more than a century of experience to our worship space

Gunar Gruenke can't hide the pride he takes in his work conserving and beautifying sacred spaces.

"If you figure the number of people who have sat under the brushstrokes of Conrad Schmitt artists and prayed to God, it is incredible," he says. "We've worked on 33 cathedrals alone: Even if you figured just 52 Masses a year—one Mass a week—it's massive!"

Bernard Gunar Gruenke is the president of Conrad Schmitt Studios, Inc., a New Berlin, Wisconsin-based firm specializing in the conservation, restoration, and beautification of sacred and public spaces.

Gunar's grandfather, Bernard O. Gruenke, joined the firm as a sign painter in 1936 and took over ownership in 1953. Gunar's father, Bernard E. Gruenke, joined the company a few years later and assumed leadership in 1981.

Since 2010, Gunar and his sister, Vice President Heidi Gruenke Emery have led the company. Three of their children also now work for Conrad Schmitt, which employs nine national project directors, seven graphic artists, and a total of 70 full-time employees. They also employ local painters and craftsman for larger projects like ours.

"We started restoring theaters in the '70s, when restoration became a movement," Gunar recalls. "We did your Minnesota State Capitol a few years ago. That was a massive project, so we were probably a little higher percentage of secular work than we normally are."

Today, 90 percent of their projects are churches. Gunar, his daughter Maddie Gruenke, and designer Cara Zietz agree they have a special love for sacred spaces.

### Renewing the Sacred

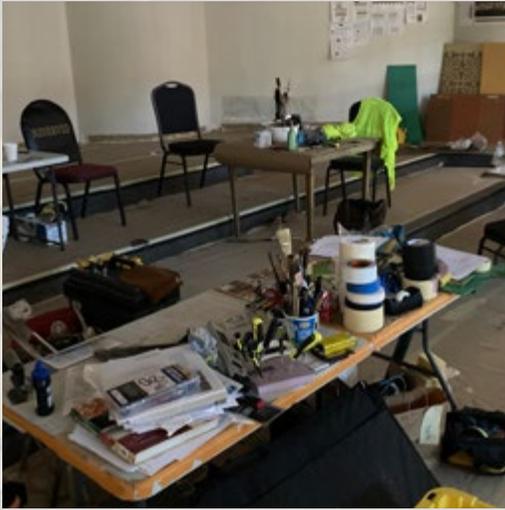
"It's special to work alongside priests," Maddie says. "They are always excited and gung-ho. With civic projects, typically we're a subcontractor dealing with the general contractor who wants us to get in and get out. With a project like this, we get to sit down and talk about why you're doing it, the long-term goals, and the effect it will have for generations. It's really amazing."

"Often Maddie and I put on our liturgical consultant hats for these churches built in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s that don't even look Catholic," Gunar says. "Or we work with super-traditional churches, like Assumption in St. Paul or St. Charles Borromeo, which we did with Father Park."

St. Michael Catholic Church is not old enough to need



Top to bottom: Our design team from Conrad Schmitt included company president Gunar Gruenke, project director Maddie Gruenke, and designer Cara Zietz. Photos courtesy of Conrad Schmitt Studios, Inc.



The nave of the church is filled with an immense network of scaffolding extending floor to ceiling, as well as stencils, renderings, and other tools of the trade for Conrad Schmitt.

restoring or conserving, per se. It's a modern worship space, with art and architectural features steeped in both Eastern and Western traditions.

"We restore many historic buildings where we go back to exactly what was there, using historic photos of the space and investigative studies as tools to replicate the original decorative design," Maddie says. "For your project, we had to design a new paint scheme. We met with Father Park and took photos of your worship space; we then brought our notes and ideas to Cara to create a vision and design."

"We try to steep ourselves in sacred art, so that even in a modern space like yours we create something that is traditional and timeless," Cara says. "You have a nice blend of very traditional, historic artwork—I think it's probably my favorite project so far!"

### Technology and Teamwork

Cara chose the photo that offered the best view of the space, then Gunar and Maddie provided details on scope and scale for the project: budget guidelines, overall direction, and what can be decorated in the space. Finally, Cara went to work on colors and designs.

Borders, beams, and pillars; medallions and vine-work; decorative windows and angelic icons—in the past, these would have been rendered using watercolors; today a computer with design software enables designers to create designs and stencils in two dimensions, then overlay the designs on a photo of the space, with proper color and perspective. Design and color changes are quicker and easier to render, as well.

"Everything is designed not only to be beautiful, but meaningful. Every stencil, every design has meaning," says Cara. "And then Father came back with all the beautiful scripture verses! I prayed quite a bit for this project, and I think the prayer worked."

The project requires extensive, floor-to-ceiling scaffolding, which makes this the most economical time to make updates to the sound and lighting in the church. All of this work is slated to be finished by Holy Week. As a result, Conrad Schmitt has a team of eight working onsite, including experienced full-timers and talented freelancers.

It's an aggressive timeline, but they agree the project is worth the added effort.

"That mix of veterans and new local labor boosts the economy, and using the local talent gives us a chance to see who wants to be a part of our growing team," says Maddie.

"We've never had a project that had artwork from the East meeting artwork from the West. And we've worked on 100+-year-old churches and brand-new churches, but nothing where the work was partially done and our job was to finish it out," Gunar says. "This is such a unique project for us."

## PROVIDENCE PROVIDES

Originally, Conrad Schmitt was hired to develop a long-term vision for the church interior, so if people were interested in making a gift to enhance the worship space, we would have a plan in place. Conrad Schmitt finished their design work in summer of 2021; the following spring a generous donor who wanted to leave a visible legacy in our church made an unexpected, large donation to complete much of the painting and decorating they envisioned. When the rest of the parish found out, many more donors stepped forward to finish financing the vision. **Thank you for your generosity!**



# PARISH LIFE: MISSION TRIP, WI



# WINTER FAITH CAMP, AWAKENING



Facing page: Check out highlights from our Mission Trip to the Mustard Seed Community in the Dominican Republic this past January. This page: High-schoolers enjoyed Winter Faith Camp in February, and men and women deepened their faith at the Spring Awakening Retreat in March.



# ‘LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME’

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd invites children heart-first into their Catholic faith

The church is bustling—but in a peaceful corner on the lower level, the atmosphere is hushed. A boy prepares a small replica of our altar as it would be for Mass. Nearby, a girl works through Bible stories using small wooden figures. Younger students practice pouring from one vessel to another in preparation for cruets of water and wine, and a spirit of prayerful attentiveness pervades.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a Montessori-based approach to religious formation, rooted in sacred scripture and the liturgy of the Catholic Church. At Saint Michael, it’s a weekly program offered October through May, with 90-minute sessions for Level 1 (ages 3-6), Level 2 (age 6-9), and Level 3 (age 9-12).

Faith Formation Coordinator Andrea Zachman brought CGS to St. Michael in 2017 and has grown it quickly over the past several years.

“When I first heard about it, I truly had no interest—I didn’t want to learn a whole new method,” she recalls. “Then we went to see it firsthand with Jessica Soden at St. Henry’s in Monticello.”

Soden knelt quietly on the floor of the atrium—her dedicated CGS learning space—and taught her visitors as she would children. Several were moved to tears.

“I remember thinking, ‘Do I wait ‘til we get back? Do I give it a couple days?’” Zachman says. “Then, before we even left the parking lot, I said, ‘How can I learn this? What do I need to do?’”

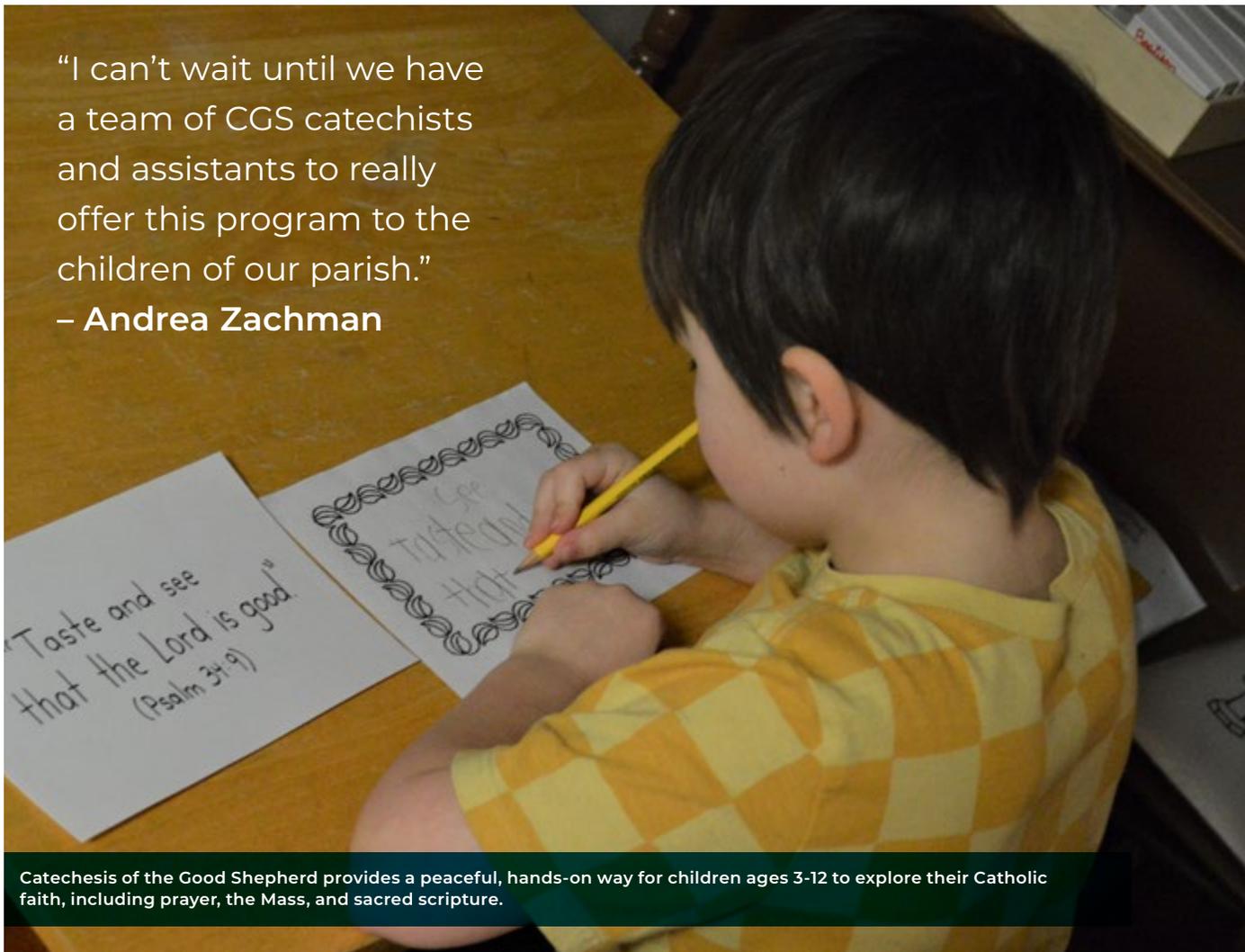
She trained for Level 1 and launched CGS right away in a tiny corner classroom. She moved to Level 2 training almost immediately and, over the next five years, oversaw knocking down walls, repainting, recarpeting, and equipping a larger atrium for Levels 1 and 2.

Last year she completed Level 3 training; now she and two other trained catechists lead four Level 1 sessions, two for Level 2, and a Level 3 session every week. Her dream is to offer CGS to every parish family, but the program needs dedicated volunteers. While certification isn’t required to assist, to be a lead teacher requires 100 hours training per level.

“It’s a commitment, whether you are called to be trained or just to assist,” Zachman says. “You have to

“I can’t wait until we have a team of CGS catechists and assistants to really offer this program to the children of our parish.”

– **Andrea Zachman**



Catechesis of the Good Shepherd provides a peaceful, hands-on way for children ages 3-12 to explore their Catholic faith, including prayer, the Mass, and sacred scripture.



want to teach children about who they are and who God is; you have to be calm and patient. And you have to be vulnerable and open to understanding things in a whole new light yourself.”

Parents see the fruits firsthand: a deepening of their children’s faith, life of prayer, and participation in the Mass.

“Children have such immense worth and dignity,” Zachman says. “If we can help them fall in love with God before they learn all the ‘rules,’ that’s the greatest fruit I can imagine, because then God is a loving Father who knows what’s best and wants them to have life to the full. Once children fall in love with God, they want to be close to Him, following His commandments.”

## **LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED**

We need more adult assistants and, ideally, more trained catechists before we can offer additional sessions. If you are interested in volunteering as an assistant or training as a CGS catechist, contact Andrea Zachman at 763-497-2745 ext. 216 or [azachman@stmccatholicchurch.org](mailto:azachman@stmccatholicchurch.org). You can also contact her with questions or to sit in on an upcoming session to see the program firsthand. Open houses are planned for this summer; registration opens on August 1 and fills very quickly!

## The Tenth Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments



The Stations of the Cross begin on the back wall of the worship space, on the choir side of the main doors. The tenth station is in the front of church to the right of the sanctuary, outside of the confessionals.

*As dry as a potsherd is my throat; my tongue cleaves to my palate; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me; a pack of evildoers closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They stare at me and gloat; they divide my garments among them; for my clothing they cast lots.*

– *Psalms 22:16-19*

At the Tenth Station, our Lord is stripped of his garments and appears before the crowds, exposed and vulnerable. For the Jews, public nudity is taboo. Clothes confer dignity and status on a person, so this final degradation before the crucifixion appears to strip Jesus of everything He has left. We see both the red and the blue garments on the cross behind Him: Both his divine and His human nature have seemingly been taken from Him. Our Lord and Savior has been rendered by His captors as something less than human, and in their pragmatism and greed, they cast lots to decide who would claim His tunic.

Yet even in this lowly state, Christ remains infinitely more than human. He is God, and although his earthly form is broken and exposed, as a man He is still the truest image of God. It was not always the case that nakedness was regarded as demeaning or dangerous. Before the Fall, we read that “The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame” (Genesis 2:25). The first response of Adam and Eve to the realization of their sin of disobedience is to cover themselves and hide from God. Thus our clothes signify our status in two ways: They convey both our worldly wealth and our heavenly poverty, reminding us of the God-given dignity we abuse due to sin.

## WINTERFEST BREAKS RECORDS AGAIN

Our 2023 Winterfest this past February was a great success, with strong attendance for Saturday night's spaghetti dinner and our best turnout ever for meat raffles and bingo on Sunday. The bake sale generated record sales, and overall, this year's Winterfest broke \$40,000 in gross income for the first time ever.

It takes a lot of people to put this event together, and we appreciate the support. Some of the people who worked this event have done this for more than 20 years. Thank you to everyone who came out to enjoy this year's activities! We look forward to next year having this event in the new social hall.

### WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

If you are interested in helping with next year's Winterfest, please contact the parish office at 763-497-2745 to be added to the volunteer list.





# DREAM • EXPLORE • DISCOVER

## Join Us at Bids for Kids on April 29 in St. Joseph Hall

All area families are invited to Bids for Kids, our Catholic school's annual gala and biggest fundraiser of the year. Our 2023 co-chairs, Stacey and Corey Anderson and Sarah and Tom Johnston, are especially excited because this year's event is coming home!

"It's exciting as we will get to host Bids for Kids at our very own St. Joseph Hall, the new social hall at St. Michael Catholic Church," says Stacey. "We are also very excited to have the live auction back!"

This year's theme, Dream, Explore, Discover, captures the spirit of Catholic education as well as the enthusiasm of everyone involved. Demand for Catholic education is growing in our community, and school leaders and families are envisioning a bright future.

"There are many ways to help make Bids a success," Stacey says. "Helping can be as easy as logging in and bidding on our variety of baskets and experiences the night of the event, or better yet, purchasing a ticket and enjoying a fun night of fellowship and giving. If you own a business and want to sponsor the gala or purchase an ad, you can visit [StMCS.cbo.io](http://StMCS.cbo.io) or email [B4K@stmccatholicsschool.org](mailto:B4K@stmccatholicsschool.org)."



ONE BODY



It takes a lot of volunteer support to plan and staff Bids for Kids, and even more to run a thriving Catholic school and parish. The Andersons and Johnstons encourage everyone to find their reason to get involved.

"We decided to get involved with Bids for Kids to connect with other school families and make a positive difference in our children's education," Sarah says.

"I saw it as a fun and interesting challenge," Tom says. "How can I help make it a success year after year?"

"I saw an opportunity to build on something that was already there and the challenge of raising more than last year," says Corey.

"Joining the school later than most families—our oldest started in 5th grade—was the best decision we've made," Stacey says. "We feel connected to so many wonderful people and have made some great life long friends."

### LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED

Email [B4K@stmccatholicsschool.org](mailto:B4K@stmccatholicsschool.org) with questions or to volunteer.

# ST. JOSEPH HALL OPENS NEW POSSIBILITIES



Our new social hall and gym are currently arranged for Mass (above), but our normal set-up will accommodate hospitality, parish-wide events, and more (below)—and that's not taking into account using the new gym for recreational activities and games!



# ILITIES FOR PARISH AND COMMUNITY



The first external event in our new facilities was Options for Women | Cornerstone's 10th Anniversary Gala in January. Photos courtesy of Cornerstone/ Michelle LeMonds Photography.

**#StMCCBOLD**



## JOIN US FOR MERCY NIGHT AND OUR INDIVIDUAL PENANCE SERVICE

Our next Mercy Night is Thursday, March 30, beginning at 7:00 PM in the social hall and gym, featuring Adoration, Reconciliation, and praise and worship music. Childcare is available. Open to everyone; childcare is available—stay as little or as long as you like!

*Note: This is the Mercy Night for April, a week early due to Holy Week.*





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**SUNDAY MASS**

Saturday Vigil 5:00 PM

Sunday 7:30 AM, 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM, 6:00 PM

**WEEKDAY MASS**

Monday 7:30 AM

Tuesday 6:30 PM

Wednesday 7:40 AM (School Mass), 5:30 PM

Thursday 7:30 AM

Friday 7:30 AM

Saturday 8:00 AM

**RECONCILIATION**

Saturday 8:30-9:30 AM, 4:00-4:45 PM

Sunday 5:00-5:45 PM

Tuesday 5:30-6:15 PM

Wednesday: 4:30-5:15 PM

Thursday 8:00-8:30 AM

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

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# JOIN US FOR HOLY WEEK

**HOLY THURSDAY: APRIL 6 AT 7:00 PM**

**GOOD FRIDAY: APRIL 7 AT 3:00 PM**

**HOLY SATURDAY (EASTER VIGIL): APRIL 8 AT 8:30 PM**

**EASTER SUNDAY: APRIL 9 AT 7:00 AM, 9:00 AM, AND 11:00 AM**

Come worship with us and see our beautiful, newly decorated church in person. For a complete Lent and Easter schedule, visit [stmccatholicchurch.org/easter](http://stmccatholicchurch.org/easter).