

Missionary Disciples

to the People of Northern and Western Alaska



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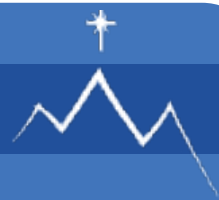
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Diocese of Fairbanks - December 2023 - Volume 28 Number 3



DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS



December Edition

"Missionary Disciples" is a publication of the Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks that serves northern and western Alaska. Its purpose is to provide a regular opportunity for all ministries throughout the Diocese to share information so our tremendous diversity may enrich our common mission of service to the people of our Diocese.

If you have questions or suggestions, please contact David Schienle at the Chancery at (907) 374-9500 or dschienle@cbna.org.

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Credits

Editor
David Schienle

Contributors
Rev. Alphonsus Afina
Rev. Peter Bang
Ronni Bennett
Bro. Justin Huber, O.F.M.
Rev. Bart Hutcherson, O.P.
Bp. Steven J. Maekawa, O.P.
Misty Mealey
Pat Tam
Rev. Michal Ulaski

Proofreaders
Carolyn J. Dukes
Maureen Farley
Katrina Francesco
Rev. Ross Tozzi
Ryan Wood

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Cover photo: Bishop Steven J. Maekawa, O.P. at his episcopal ordination.

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Advent Message from Bishop Steven J. Maekawa, O.P.

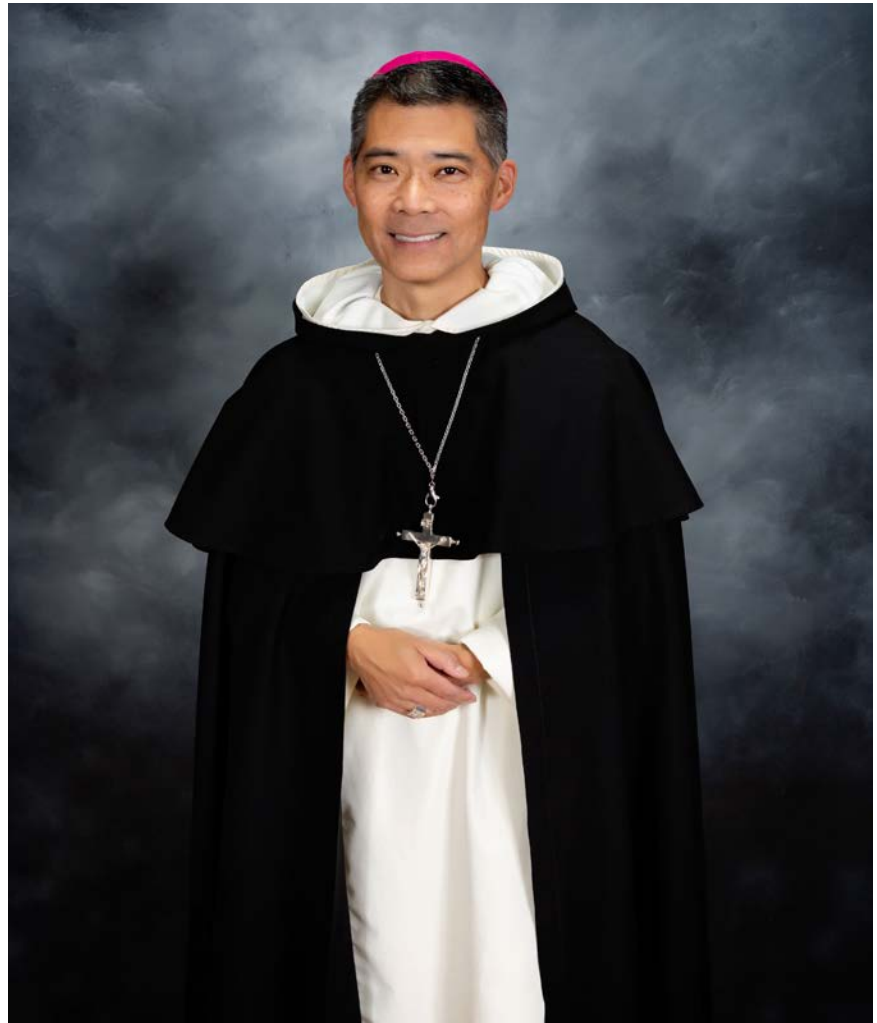
“Prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley.” Isaiah 40:3

The Season of Advent.

The prophet Isaiah uses imagery from the field of civil engineering employed in the ancient world. To this very day, the idea of leveling hills and using the dirt and rocks to fill in valleys to create a flat highway is employed as an effective road-building technique. We call it “cut and fill” and there are examples of it everywhere on the roads and highways of America.

Isaiah uses the image of “cut and fill” as a metaphor for the Jews creating a road home from exile in Babylon to their homeland in Israel and the city of Jerusalem. Their “preparing the way” consists of spiritual preparation and religious purity. They are to be ready in mind, heart and soul to take action when the time of Lord is at hand to bring them back from Exile.

This Advent we can think of cut and fill road building in the spiritual sense as cutting away the presence of sin and filling in the voids in our virtue. In Alaska, perhaps what we are building is not a highway, but an airstrip for the



Official Portrait of Steven Maekawa, O.P.

Lord. A big, centrally located place, cleared of trees, level and smooth, where Jesus Christ can land to bring in people and supplies like the Communion of Saints and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

We begin Advent in a place of utter darkness. Our world is dark as the night when it is without the truth and grace

of God. The candles of the Advent wreath remind us that the Light of God approaches. The Gospel stories of Jesus’ nativity leading up to his birth tell us that the grace of God is working in many others but the fruit of this grace cannot yet directly be seen. Starting with Mary and then Joseph, John, Elizabeth and Zechariah, we see these

Holy people as “candles of God” who are being lit by the presence of Jesus in Mary’s womb. God is coming to meet us, a people stranded in the darkness, and signs of his light cannot be completely hidden.

At Christmas, the dawn from on high will break upon us. The choirs of angels appear to the shepherds in the fields. They light up the night sky to announce the birth of Jesus. No need for candles now. The Lord is

not near. The Lord is here! The shepherds are bathed in the light of the angels. They are not spectators in the story of salvation. They are participants. What do they do?

They go. They go to Jesus with haste and without fear. To be even more surprised and overwhelmed by what they find: the Word made Flesh and dwelling among us. The Light of the World in a manger. Jesus was born into the world as

one of us. As an expression of God wanting us to trust him, he allows himself to be brought into the world utterly dependent on those he has come to save.

This Advent, prepare the way of the Lord. Make a highway (or an airstrip) – cut away sins, fill the gaps of virtue so that when he comes at Christmas we are ready. We are ready to go meet the Lord, who has come to bring us back from exile, home to our Father in heaven.

Where is Bishop Steve?

After being ordained bishop for the Diocese of Fairbanks, Bishop Steve has visited parishes to get to know the Diocese. You might see him soon at your parish.



Bishop Steve traveling by plane in the Y-K Region.



Bishop Steve outside the church in Toksook Bay.



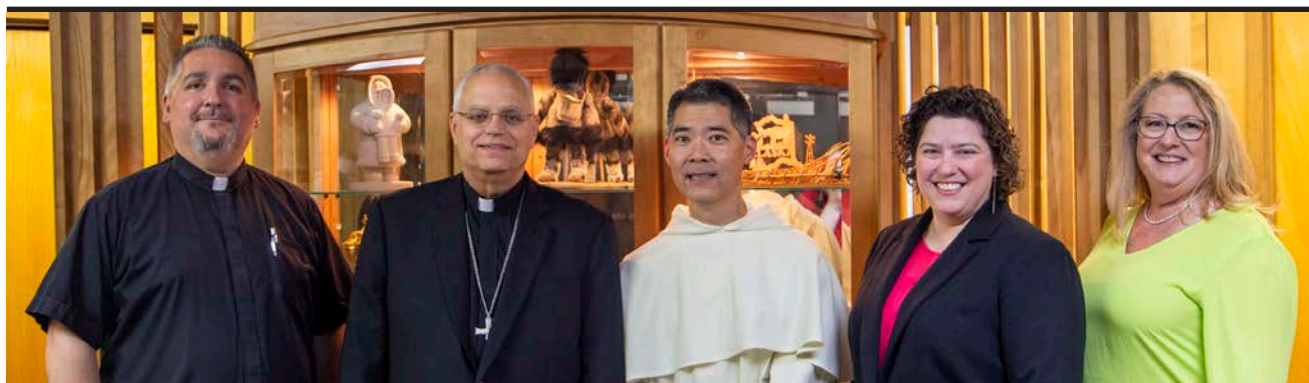
Bishop Steve visiting homes in Emmonak.



Bishop Steve visiting Father Thinh in Nulato.

Job Openings

<https://dioceseoffairbanks.org/job-postings>



For more information, to request a formal job description, or to submit a cover letter and résumé please contact humanresources@cbna.org.

Maintenance Technician

In collaboration with the Diocesan Maintenance Team, the Maintenance Technician is responsible for performing facility management and upkeep of buildings located on the Peger Road campus and other buildings managed by the Chancery, including parishes with a signed maintenance agreement. Duties also include grounds maintenance and assisting parishes with maintenance questions and concerns. Full-time exempt position with benefits. Salary DOE.

Digital Content Coordinator

The Digital Content Coordinator creates content for the diocesan website and social media accounts and monitors the online presence of the Diocese of Fairbanks. All content and posts are intended to improve awareness of diocesan initiatives, communicate on behalf of the bishop, and engage with online followers so that the evangelical work of the diocese may bear fruit. The Digital Content Coordinator stays up to date on the latest social media trends and technologies and strategizes new social media campaigns and initiatives. Their primary duties involve writing social media posts, producing content, analyzing data, and scheduling posts. Part-time position. Salary DOE.

Faith and Family Formation Director

The Director of Faith and Family Formation promotes family ministry, religious education, sacramental preparation, and youth/young adult ministry throughout the diocese by providing resources and opportunities for individual parishes and diocesan regions to strengthen their outreach and catechesis to individuals and families of all ages and social situations. The Office of Faith and Family Formation is born of the fruit of Pope Francis' call to strengthen the family and the reflections found in his apostolic exhortations *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) and *Amoris Laetitia* (2016). Full-time exempt position with benefits. Salary DOE.

A Message of Thanks

Bishop Steven J. Maekawa, O.P., and the Chancery Staff of the Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks would like to extend a most grateful thank you to all who participated in the Ordination and Installation of Bishop Maekawa and especially to those volunteers who contributed so generously of their time and gifts.

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Fairbanks Youth Soccer Association
Interior Graphics & Printing
Midnight Sun Catering
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Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus
Honor Students from Catholic Schools of Fairbanks
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Sacred Heart Cathedral Hospitality Committee

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Sacred Heart Cathedral, Fairbanks
Servidora Sisters
St. Mark University Parish, Fairbanks
St. Nicholas Church, North Pole
St. Raphael Church, Fairbanks
Western Dominican Province

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Steve Adamczak
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Marie Angaiak

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 Bishop Chad W. Zielinski,
 Diocese of New Ulm



Bishop Maekawa sitting in the cathedra next to Bishop Barber (Left) and Bishop Zielinski (Right).

Photos from the Ordination

More photos can be found at the Diocesan Flickr account at:
<https://bit.ly/46OJ8BT>



Group photo of visiting Dominicans with then Bishop-elect Maekawa.



Newly ordained Bishop Maekawa, O.P. celebrating Mass at the altar surrounded by concelebrates.



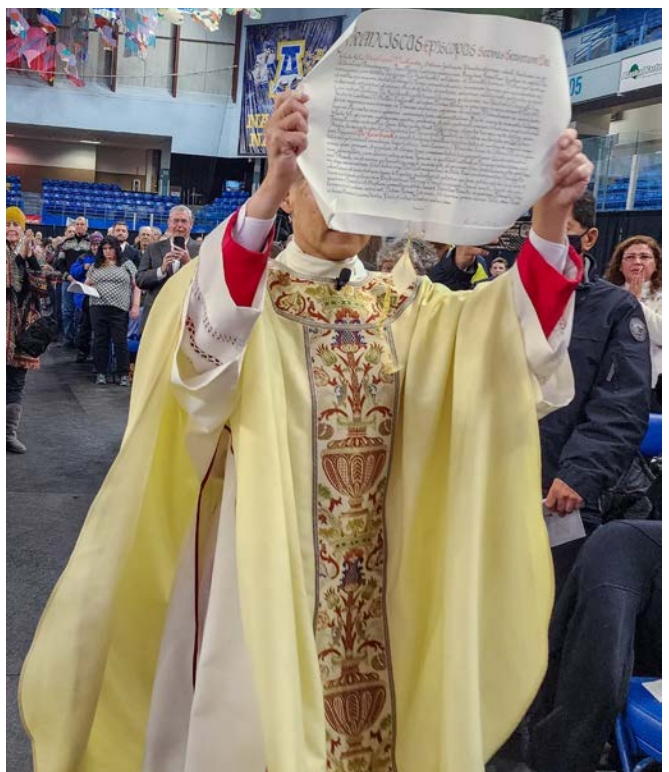
Bishop Kettler laying hands on Bishop Maekawa.



The book of the Gospels held above Bishop Maekawa.



Bishop-elect Maekawa making his Oath of Fidelity.



Bishop Maekawa showing the ordination mandate.



**Ministry in Nome Area:
Serving the Remote Villages of Alaska
by Father Alphonsus Afina**





Above: Sunday Mass in Teller with teachers. Opposite Page, Above: Fathers Alphonsus Afina and Michal Ulaski celebrating Mass. Opposite Page, Below: St. Joseph Church in Nome with Christmas lights.

The gospel mandate of Christ sending his disciples, the 72 others, two-by-two, is exemplified in the missionary activities of Father Michal and myself serving in the Norton Sound and Seward Peninsula region of the Diocese. Living together with another priest helps in experiencing the communal life of the early Christian community in Acts of the Apostles, where the early Christians lived together, prayed together, and shared everything in common, especially the breaking of the bread. Living in the rectory with Father Michal allowed me to experience the mercy of God in the sacrament of reconciliation and strength from the weekday concelebrated Masses a few times a month. This communal life is for a short time as one priest is out for the month while the other stays in Nome for daily weekday

Masses at 6 P.M., Eucharistic adoration at 5 P.M., Masses in the Quyanna Care Center for the elderly every Wednesday, and any other pastoral engagements as they come.

Having seven churches to cover, Father Michal and I travel through the villages reminiscent of the missionary activities of St. Paul our father in the faith. While I was out of Nome in October, Father Michal was able to go to Teller twice, and he was welcomed with zeal and joy by the new teachers serving the local school. With the arrival of the teachers, we now have an increased number of those we minister to in Teller, 72 miles away from Nome. The increased number of school teachers and workers this year is more than ever, as we now have over 60 new Catholic members. This number has increased the growing

population of people we serve in St Michael, Unalakleet, Stebbins, Kotzebue, Teller, Nome, and Little Diomed.

On the 7th of November, I celebrated the Mass for over 60 Catholic teachers in Unalakleet who came for a regional school workshop. Initially, I was due to return to Nome two days prior. However, I was approached to stay longer to meet the arrival of the teachers who had already indicated interest in attending Mass and having the sacrament of reconciliation, as many of them are serving where they have no Catholic Church or priest. I was moved by their act of faith and the desire to practice their Catholic faith despite the challenges of the terrain and availability of priests in certain parts of Alaska. While I was in St. Michael with a funeral Mass, bidding



Father Michal Ulaski helps check a parishioner's net, and both priests receive a donation of fish.

farewell to a parishioner who, in baptism, died with Christ, Father Michael was in Nome baptizing a newborn baby into the Body of Christ, the Church. These two opposing actions, baptism, and funeral, are our daily and most frequent experiences.

While we do infant

baptisms, the immediate next celebration might be a funeral Mass. Sometimes, a priest will celebrate the sacrament of baptism, and in less than a week, the same priest will switch into the funeral setting to mourn the passing away of a parishioner. These two opposing experiences are

what a priest encounters most frequently, serving in Nome, St. Michael, Stebbins, Unalakleet, Teller, Kotzebue, and Diomedes. But the grace of God is always available to help and give us strength.

Young Adults Retreat

By Pat Tam, Adult Faith Formation for Y-K Region



Participants in the Young Adults Retreat in the Y-K Region.

Before the Covid pandemic, Adult Faith Formation had been organizing an annual retreat for young adults in the Y-K Region for several years. Father Tri Dinh, S.J., who works in young adult ministry with Christus Ministries in CA, would come up each year to Bethel to lead the weekend retreat. We had planned on this event again last April, but Father Tri became ill just a few days before the retreat. Rather than wait a year for the gathering, we rescheduled the event for October 6-8, 2023.

This year's retreat centered on the theme of "Encountering Hope." Twelve young adults and older adults (ranging from 20s to 60s) gathered at the Moravian Seminary for a weekend of reflection, prayer, and liturgy. Retreatants came from Chevak, Marshall, Saint Marys, Emmonak, Tununak, and Bethel. Father Tri led the retreat, and five facilitators helped with small group discussions. Lala and Dominic Hunt of the Ukveryaramta Tungiiun

ministry support team provided music while Father Gregg Wood, S.J., and Father Jay Von Handorf celebrated Reconciliation and Eucharist with the group. ThiThoa Ton, who also works with Christus Ministries, came to Bethel with Father Tri to cook meals for the retreat as well as help with setting up retreat exercises.

The retreat started with a hands-on exercise of exploding paint capsules to help build small group unity. Other craft activities during the weekend helped to

inspire reflection and sharing using images and designs. Reflection questions like “How do I sense God?” and “My best/worst day ever?” led to a deeper personal exploration of grief and hope. Jessica Hunt of Emmonak, one of the small group facilitators, observed, “The retreat was a safe space that felt so welcoming...Everyone had a huge desire to share in our group. Our people are crying to share their best and worst with someone in a place where they feel comfortable...It definitely helped to provide those who

attended with a place to love and be loved—as brothers and sisters in Christ. It was an honor to witness God working on so many people on such deep levels in such a short amount of time.” Danielle Beaver, a young adult from Beaver who attended this retreat for the first time, said, “Usually I am a very guarded person with my emotions and my feelings...While at the retreat, I felt comfortable enough to let down my walls and show my real emotions and share my feelings...The retreat helped me realize I was still in need of healing.”

At the end of the weekend, the group expressed a desire for more experiences like this retreat. They had been willing to share deeply and openly with one another, even the most painful aspects of their spiritual journey. And in the sharing, they found a sense of peace and hope. In response, Father Tri was open to the suggestion of a second retreat in April 2024. If enough funding is available, we hope to make that suggestion a reality.

Parish Ministers Retreat

By Pat Tam, Adult Faith Formation for Y-K Region

One of the goals of the Ukveryaramta Tungiinun team is to provide support and ongoing formation of parish ministers in the Y-K Region. To this end, organizing retreats has been one of our main activities this fall. An annual retreat for Yup'ik deacons and their wives took place on September 28 to October 2. Then, on October 6-8, a retreat for young adults was offered. That weekend was also a chance to renew and support those who minister to young adults. It made sense that we should also offer a retreat for the various lay ministers in our Y-K parishes.

On November 17-19, twelve parish ministers gathered in Bethel at the Moravian Seminary for a retreat. These ministers — Eucharistic ministers, lectors, song leaders,

parish maintenance, and administrators — came from Mountain Village, Hooper Bay, Chefornek, Scammon Bay, Emmonak, Tununak, Kotlik, and Bethel.

The retreat was led by Lala Hunt and Sr. Kathy Radich, O.S.F., on the theme “Come, Eat.” They had already given this retreat in August to an Alaskan Native group in the Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau. During this year of the Eucharistic Renewal, the retreat theme connected our common human experience of sharing meals with the Eucharistic spirituality of “giving thanks.” Each session started with Sr. Kathy breaking open ten meal stories from the Gospel of Luke, followed by Lala offering personal reflections through her Yup'ik lens. After a period of quiet reflection

and journaling time, people went into break-out groups to share their thoughts.

Between sessions of looking at Gospel stories was the introduction to various forms of prayer, such as centering prayer, examen, lectio divina, and the Divine Office. The hope was that parish ministers would learn to use these tools for their own spiritual growth when they returned home.

The Ministers Retreat was a much-needed booster for those who serve our Y-K parishes, especially in places not often served by deacons or priests. We continue to hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will call forth Y/Cup'ik men and women to live out their baptismal call to build up the Body of Christ.



Native Dancing during Young Adults Retreat.



Writing activity during Young Adults Retreat.

From South Korea to Alaska: Father Peter Bang's Journey to Becoming a Missionary Priest

Interview by David Schienle



Father Peter Bang celebrating Mass at St. John Berchmans Church in Galena, AK.

Father Peter Bang arrived in Fairbanks from South Korea this November to serve as a missionary priest. As one of the most remote dioceses in the United States, the Diocese needs to borrow priests from around the world. Father Peter is the first South Korean to be assigned to the Diocese of Fairbanks.

In an interview with David Schienle, Father Peter Bang shared about his youth and interest in becoming a priest. He was baptized as a baby when his whole family

converted to Catholicism and entered the Church. He grew up in Daegu, South Korea, but was a lukewarm Catholic. After graduating high school, he had a renewed interest

in the Church and felt a calling to become a priest. In 2006, he entered Daegu Catholic University, which had a seminary attached. He attended for seven years,

including two years of military service and a year of pastoral internship. By chance, every other year, the Archdiocese of Daegu sends a seminarian to the Diocese of Cleveland to study there, and after ordination, they minister there for four years. In November 2012, he was informed he would be the seminarian to go.

He entered the Seminary in Cleveland in January 2013 and was ordained in May 2017. His first assignment was Holy Angels Church in Chagrin Falls, OH, for a year and a half. He was then transferred to St. Mary's Church in Plainville, Ohio, for two and a half years. After those assignments, he returned to Korea for six months when his Archbishop told him he wanted him to study spirituality in Rome. He studied Italian for six months, then took classes at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas for a semester. He also ministered to a Filipino community in Rome for a year until he asked his Archbishop for permission to do missionary work. While in seminary, he developed an interest in serving as a missionary. After his study in Rome, he returned to Korea for a short time to prepare to go to Alaska.

Before Father Peter left Cleveland, during his final meeting with Bishop Edward Malesic, he mentioned to the bishop that he was interested in missionary work. By chance, Bishop Malesic went to bishop's school in Rome with Bishop Chad Zielinski. Bishop Malesic mentioned to Father Peter the great need for priests in Alaska. After talking with Bishop Chad Zielinski about possibly serving in



Father Bang's priestly ordination at St. John the Evangelist Cathedral, Cleveland, OH.



Father Bang leading the stations of cross on Good Friday in Chagrin Falls, OH.



Father Peter Bang with a Young Adult Group at Bokja Catholic Church in Daegu, South Korea.

the Diocese, he prayed for several months. Bishop Zielinski was transferred to the Diocese of New Ulm during that time. Without a bishop we would usually not accept new priests into the Diocese. However, because he had already talked with Bishop Zielinski, Father Robert Fath asked Father Peter if he would like to spend a week in the Diocese to become familiar with what ministry is like here. Father Peter visited in March. Then he returned to Korea. When he requested the transfer, he told his Archbishop that the Archdiocese of Daegu has over 500 priests. However, the Diocese of Fairbanks only has four active incardinated priests

and 20 borrowed missionary priests, and he would like to go and help. His Archbishop replied, "If you have prayed about it and discerned, I will support you." Father Peter hopes one day to work with the poor in the Philippines.

In his home country of Korea, there are 15 dioceses. For the Archdiocese of Daegu, there are 511,000 active Catholics in a population of 4.4 million. The number of priests in the Archdiocese of Daegu has increased from 126 in 1970 to 518 in 2021. Two hundred years ago, Catholics were persecuted, and the Catholics of today are proud of their heritage. Years ago, missionaries from foreign countries spread the good news to Korea, and

today, the Archbishop of Daegu generously shares his priests with foreign dioceses, continuing the tradition of spreading the Gospel.

Since arriving, Father Peter has been assisting in at local parishes around Fairbanks. His first visit to rural Alaska was to Galena at the end of November, which he enjoyed. He is scheduled to return to Galena for Christmas. He is looking forward to serving the people of the Diocese.

If you meet Father Peter Bang, give him a warm welcome and keep the Archdiocese of Daegu in your prayers as they share one of their priests with us.

I GO THERE

BY RONNI BENNETT



What Monroe is and what it isn't: A student's perspective.

My name is Ronni Bennett, and I am a junior attending Monroe Catholic High School. I'm Catholic—born and (being) raised in Fairbanks, Alaska. I love to write, play piano, cook, and I also love to go to school. That's exactly why I'm writing this. *I love my school.* A phrase like that isn't commonly heard from a sixteen-year-old, but I'm proud to be able to say it. It's a phrase that motivates me every day. It encourages me to enthusiastically greet each morning and work towards the goals I have set.

So, what makes the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks so exceptional?

At the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks (CSF) I've experienced three especially important themes: **faith, education, and community**. Faculty and students feel like a second family—I am beyond grateful for that connection. Additionally, I feel that through education and support here at Monroe Catholic High School, opportunities for my future have surfaced; I am hopeful about those!

CSF core values are shown through the 5 Jesuit Pillars embodied by students and staff daily. These pillars are to be open to growth, intellectually competent, religious, loving, and committed to doing justice. Every day I see examples of them within the school. It's a teacher taking extra time with a student, members in a team caring for each other, students conducting community service, or students and staff participating in religious retreats. *The exceptional value of an education at CSF shines and this experience is not exclusive.*

Aren't the Catholic Schools incredibly expensive?

My family is not rich, in fact we are painfully far from ever being so. That fact might contradict some of the notions surrounding the school I go to. Many people will often ask, "Do you even go there?" My answer is, "YES, Monroe Catholic High, I go there!"

Monroe is not a place for the rich, outright. It's a place — a home — for everyone who wants to have an exceptional education with a focus on faith and a strong community. And this leads to my core hope, which is to make CSF, the school I love, available to all. I want to break that impression of exclusivity and shed light on all the impressive things we do here.

I hope to continue to submit articles covering our wonderful faculty, our sports, our student life, our faith, and more. *The first thing that I can do is to tell my own story about attending CSF.* I have attended these schools since first grade. A smaller, closer environment is what I have been accustomed to and where I thrive. Over these years, I've been through highs and lows and through it all the school was my safe haven.

In middle school, my family situation changed drastically and suddenly attending Monroe hung in the balance. During that transition, being a part of CSF was challenged and losing that community scared me. I have been fortunate to continue attending; it would never have been possible without the help of the school. Some of my closest friend's families also struggle from year-to-year with the cost of tuition as well. Despite the challenges, they all continue to find the sacrifice worth what the schools have to offer.

What makes attendance for students like this possible? Financial Aid and Tuition Grants.

The full cost of receiving a Catholic education at CSF is daunting. We know this. Many families are not paying this full price. There are financial aid opportunities for every student — from a variety of tuition discounts (based on things like income, being part of a catholic parish, and being an alumni) to a tuition reimbursement. Annually, Monroe Foundation, Inc., holds an annual dinner and auction called **HIPOW**, (Happiness is Paying Our Way). The purpose of the auction is to raise funds to help support the tuition grants needed to help supply financial aid and to help support the operational costs of the school. People from all over the state attend each October and hundreds of volunteers help make the auction and dinner a success.

My school is much more than an exclusive private school. It's a family where everyone is welcome and it's a place that strives for excellence. And alongside all of this, God is at the center. To learn more about aid opportunities and admissions you can visit www.catholic-schools.org/enrollment and make sure to check out the next page about the BEST Allotment available to families.

Our community makes our school possible!
To donate visit www.catholic-schools.org/donate

Monroe Catholic students attend Bishop Steven's Ordination



Installation of student Eucharistic Ministers at the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks



Members of the Girl's Cross Country Team pose for a picture at Regionals before heading to State.



About the author:

Ronni Bennett, a junior at MCHS, is involved in a variety of activities at CSF including Track, Cross Country, Band, Academic Decathlon, and National Honor Society. She serves as both a Eucharistic Minister and Altar Server at Mass. In her parish, Sacred Heart Cathedral, she serves as a lector.

"Monroe is not a place for the rich, outright. It's a place — a home — for everyone who wants to have an exceptional education with a focus on faith and a strong community."

—Ronni Bennett

IT'S TIME!

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2024-25



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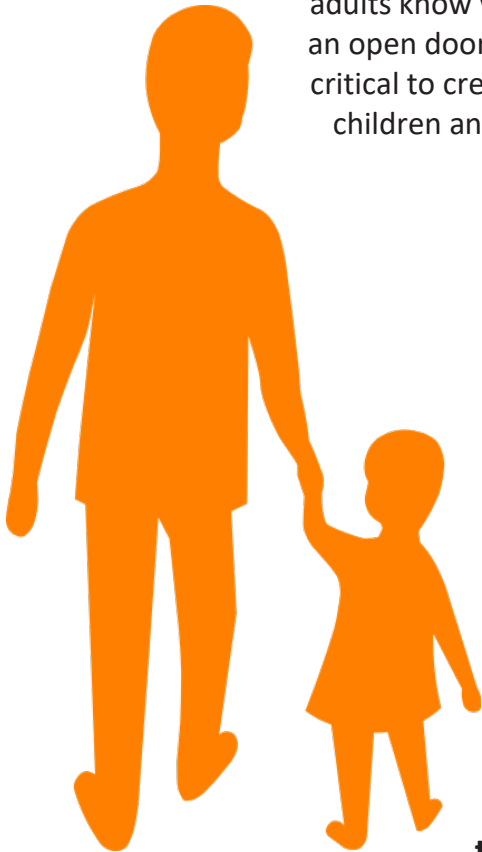
I GO THERE

BY RONNI BENNETT

Identifying Inappropriate Boundary Violations

- 1. Be aware if an adult seems to want to be with children more than other adults. Adults who abuse children try to isolate or get them alone.**

Sometimes, an adult might need to be alone with a child for counseling or disciplining conversations. However, it is essential that other adults know what is happening, where, and when. A window or an open door to the room where the meeting is happening is critical to creating safe environments. This practice helps keep children and the reputation of the adult safe.



- 2. Be aware of gifts or special attention given to a child. Gifts or bribes can be used to manipulate or influence a child or vulnerable adult.**
- Generosity in the form of giving to others is a way of offering support and kindness. However, when a gift is given in secret, it can be used to lure, bribe, or silence the one receiving the gift. Gifts can give the impression that something is now owed to the one giving the gift. Gifts should be given with permission from parents and in a public or group setting.

- 3. Be aware when an adult allows a child to partake in activities that the parents of the child would forbid.**

There is a difference between activities that parents do not allow, such as eating on the couch or staying up past their bedtime, and activities that are forbidden, such as drinking, using drugs, or looking at pornography. Predators will try to create secrets and allow rule breaking to create distance between a child and their trusted adults.

If you or someone you know has experienced abuse by a member of the Church, employee, or volunteer, your first call should be to local law enforcement. To contact the Diocese of Fairbanks Victim Assistance Coordinator call or email at (907) 374-9553 or vac@cbna.org.



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