

Under the Steeple

ST. JAMES PARISH



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THE *ALMOST FAMOUS* FATHER BRIAN PILGRIMAGE RETREAT DAY 2025: “DOORWAYS TO HOPE” WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2025

Every year since 2015, I have arranged a day pilgrimage at every parish I have been pastor. Each pilgrimage is unique with a special theme. No two trips are the same. This year’s theme is Doorways to Hope. A pilgrimage consists of a group of believers journeying together united in Christ with the intention of deepening Faith in Jesus and relationships with one another. Our group forms a unique family and fosters lasting friendships. You will absolutely enjoy this experience. We will even have fun! You will not want to miss this impressive event that will become highly anticipated in years to come.

The “Doorways” will include a tour of Hearthstone Historic House Museum, the first home in Wisconsin to feature electricity. We will visit St. Pius X parish in Appleton, which is one of three designated pilgrimage sites for the Jubilee year of Hope and was Fr. Brian’s first priestly assignment. We will

learn of a humble Capuchin porter (doorkeeper) Blessed Solanus Casey and his unique vocation to religious life and priesthood. We will pass through the door of the newly renovated St. Mary’s, Menasha.



We will celebrate Mass, pray the rosary, and have some surprises along the way. Supper will be at Good Company where we will also hear a short story of their fascinating history.

Pre-Registration is required. There is a 52-person limit and seats are claimed first come, first serve. This event will fill up fast, so don’t miss out on a beautiful day of prayer, community, and fun. Cost: \$80 per person. \$75 if you register on or before MONDAY, May 5.

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175TH ANNIVERSARY MOVES FORWARD

by Jean Schleis

*“The Lord has done great things for us;
we are filled with joy.” Psalm 126:3*

As we reflect on the theme of our 175th church anniversary, it is indeed a call to look back with gratitude for the foundation of faith that was laid here in Cooperstown way back in 1850. Building upon this long history, let us now look forward with hope, ready to face new challenges that may come our way.

If you haven’t done so already, please mark your calendar for Sunday, July 27, 2025 for a day of prayer and festivities as we conclude this year-long 175th observance. The day will begin with a 10:00am Mass celebrated by Bishop David Ricken and Bishop Frank Dewane. Two bishops!!! They will be assisted by four priests: Father Brian Belongia, Father Bill O’Brien, Father Santy Turiano Jr., and Father Dennis Ryan. The mass will be offered inside the church, and there will be a live feed in the parish hall for overflow seating. Those who are unable to attend in person will be able to view the livestream on our Facebook page.

Following Mass the festivities will continue:

- Lunch and refreshments will be available

- Cake, ice cream, souvenirs
- The Mark Jirikovec Band will be playing their tunes under a huge tent from noon until 4:00pm
- “Voices of Faith” prayer booklets will be distributed
- Two bounce houses will be set up for kids’ entertainment
- Presentation of Prayers & Principles Prizes
- Family games, teen games and kids’ games are planned throughout the afternoon
- A Photo Booth will be set up for attendees to don hats, wigs, vests, jewelry, etc. and be photographed holding a 175th anniversary sign. Photos will be uploaded to the cloud for future sharing.
- Interviews of parishioners recalling stories about St. James Parish are now being filmed. Similar to what was done for the 150th anniversary, these recordings will be looped for viewing. Anyone willing to be included can still do so by contacting Joyce Cisler at 920-905-1912 or Jane Hertel at 920-366-2402.
- A Scavenger Hunt to discover and identify some unique

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BISHOP'S APPEAL



Over 30 years ago, as I began discerning priesthood, I was invited on a seminarian retreat. That retreat was 100% paid for by the Diocese.

As I began studying for the priesthood at Mundelein Seminary, I was gifted with four wonderful years of seminary formation at no cost to me. In 2012, I had the privilege to study canon law and earn an advanced degree (called a JCL) from the Catholic University of America. That too, was a gift.

Going on twenty years of priesthood this year, I have been blessed to have been able to be part of lay ministry and diaconate formation as an instructor. I have taught courses in ecclesiology, Old Testament, and canon law to over 100 people seeking to know the Lord better to serve Him and His Holy Church. Those one hundred people, some of whom you may know, were able to grow as disciples, free of charge.

When I was serving at St. John the Evangelist parish in Green Bay, I met a wonderful group of people: the deaf community. They called the parish home because Masses were interpreted for them so they could participate as part of the community. In most years, 90 – 100% of the costs of that ministry were reimbursed to the parish by Catholic Charities.

I am grateful to the Diocese of Green Bay and Bishop Ricken for his support throughout the years. Without your generosity the diocese could not support and maintain the Church's mission in the diocese. It is through your generosity that the light of Christ shines brightly in our parishes. In a round-about-way, it is through your generosity that I have been sent here as your pastor.

I am grateful and thankful for the continual support that I have and continue to receive. That is why I continue to support the annual Bishop's Appeal. My contribution shows that I am grateful and also on board. It is also my way of giving back for

By Father Brian Belongia

the generosity afforded me. I owe so much to the generosity of others, like you, because if it had not been for it, my vocation could have been different.

Our parishes also benefit from the Bishop's Appeal. Through it our Bishop can provide training for ministers. Mission trips for our teens and young adults can be funded. Counseling and adoption services are available. Retreat opportunities, workshops for our choir, funding for the homeless, support for people in need, and countless other services are funded.

Please join me in giving generously to the Bishop's Appeal this year. I challenge you to become a Crosier member by donating \$500 or even \$1,000 if you are not one already. What return can you make to the Lord God for all that He has given us and all that He has done for us through the ministries of the Diocese of Green Bay. We depend on the grace of God and your generous support.



HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO OUR 2024-25 CATECHETICAL TEAM



As this year's Faith Formation program comes to a close, we extend our most heartfelt gratitude to our entire catechetical team.

As a parish, we are grateful for their dedication, patience, and the positive impact they have on our youth during their faith journey. No doubt, their passion for our faith is inspiring for our youth. The time, energy, and love that each one brings to this important ministry is a powerful sign of Christian Discipleship, which we are all called to live and to share.

St. James Parish is blessed with many dedicated catechists, and we are grateful to them and for them:



Jennifer Baugnet
Traci Hickey
Brenda Loritz
Raquel Duescher
Patty Nysse
Joan Lindahl
Nancy Kinjerski
Kevin Konkol
Craig Satori
Monica Winnkens
Deacon Dan Gray
Mary Ozarowicz
Jessica Lambert
Patty Bekkers
Jean Schleis
Janeen Phelps
Tom Bekkers
Leila Marcy

MAINTENANCE

by John Heiser

We are currently looking at the following projects once the weather gets better.

1. Addressing leaks on both the church and rectory roofs.
2. Possibly putting in air conditioning in the rectory.
3. Dismantling the rotted deck over the rectory garage.
4. Replacing the landscape edging around the buildings.



CEMETERY PLOTS PRICE INCREASE

by Brandon Wotachek

Burying the dead is a Corporal Work of Mercy that involves the generous stewardship of time, talent, and treasure. It is essential that the cemetery be well maintained now and in the future.



Effective July 1, 2025, the cost per grave plot will increase from \$500 to \$800 for parish members, and from \$800 to \$1500 for non-parishioners.

The last increase in cemetery rates occurred in 2003. Most of the revenue needed for general maintenance and upkeep is generated directly from plot sales. Additionally, it is necessary to ensure proper maintenance long after our current ceme-

tery space is full.

Look at the cost of a burial space as an investment into the future maintenance and beautification of our cemetery. Twenty-five percent of the purchase price for each plot is designated for perpetual care, which is a fund from which the growing principle can never be used.

I am proud to be the sexton of St. James Cemetery to which I have a personal connection. Over the past few years, I have taken the initiative to make many needed improvements to our aging cemetery. We have scheduled spring and fall clean up days. Many headstones have been cleaned, repaired, and straightened. Sunken graves have been leveled, and we had water lines run to

the back of the cemetery. Much of the maintenance, (minus the lawn cutting and the opening and closing of graves) is handled by volunteers. However, there are always equipment and other charges that cost money.

I will be available after a few Masses this spring to give you a chance to purchase plots before the price increase and to answer any other questions. Please know that we are grateful for your generosity to the cemetery. We are always accepting donations to continue our important work.

If you have any questions or wish to meet with me about the cemetery or purchasing plots, please contact me at 920-360-9356 or email me at brandon.wotachek@outlook.com.

Bereavement Ministry

Upcoming Grief Groups

- May 18 Gender Differences in Grief
July 20 What to Say to Someone Who is Grieving

Meetings are held in St. James Parish Hall and via Zoom.
Contact Tom Bekkers for more information 920-660-8066.

OPEN POSITION

Our parish secretary, Kathleen Kochan, has resigned effective July 1, 2025. If interested in this part-time position, please contact Father Brian. Please watch the bulletin for more info.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

by Jim Wavrunek

The Knights of Columbus were established by Blessed Fr. Michael J. McGivney in 1882. He had the vision and foresight to conceive an organization which would provide Catholic men the opportunity to live their faith through charitable works, caring for their families and defending the Catholic Faith.

Denmark Council #4735 has 160 members. Many of them serve their parishes as lectors, communion distributors, ushers, choir members, committee members and other roles. Last year the Denmark Knights donated \$96,000.00. Here are a few of their recent contributions:



- ◆ They helped to support St. James Church with donations for such things as the parking lot, altar necessities, a new phone system for the offices, mass server robes, and the dinner and dance fundraiser. Their outreach extended to Fr. Santy with the Filipino disaster relief, and the Coats for Kids drive.
- ◆ The 40 Days for Life Campaign. The Knights of Columbus are pro-life.

- ◆ The local food pantry.
- ◆ Five \$500 scholarships annually to high school seniors who will attend an accredited 4-year college or an accredited 2-year technical college.
- ◆ They have formed a partnership with All Saints

School to promote Catholic Education in Denmark and the surrounding parishes.

- ◆ Our Tootsie Roll Drive has given over \$37,500 to aid citizens with intellectual disabilities in Denmark since 1987.
- ◆ An Annual Golf outing at Wander Springs Golf Course helps a local family in need. Last year we supported the Frank Horkman Family with a donation of \$53,000.
- ◆ Through our booyah sales, we gave \$500 each to 16 seminarians last year and since 2011, we have donated \$71,000 to young men studying for the priesthood.

If you would like to become a member of the Knights of Columbus please reach out to Jim Wavrunek.

“DOORWAYS TO HOPE.” *continued from page 1*

The cost includes: Lamer's Coach Bus, Lunch, Supper (except drinks), and museum ticket. Pilgrims will meet at St. James, Cooperstown at 7:30am and return around 8:00pm.

Registration is open exclusively to St. James and St. Joseph parishioners and their invited guests through **MONDAY, May 5, 2025.**

After May 5, registrations will be open to non-parishioners and Fr. Brian's former parishioners.

To Register, contact Kathleen at (920) 863-2585 or by email: secretary@stjamescooperstown.org You may also register by stopping in person at either parish office.

In Christ, Father Brian

HOLY WEEK

Holy Thursday	April 17	7:00 pm	St. Joseph, Kellnersville <i>No evening Mass at St. James</i>
Good Friday	April 18	12:00 noon 3:00 pm	St. Joseph, Kellnersville St. James, Cooperstown
Holy Saturday	April 19	8:15 pm	St. James, Cooperstown <i>No regular Saturday Mass at either parish</i>
Easter Sunday	April 20	8:00 am 10:00 am	St. James, Cooperstown St. Joseph, Kellnersville

REFLECTIONS ON THE PASSION

IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Saturday, April 12 9:00—11:00am
St. James Parish

Fr. Brian will offer an extended reflection on the Good Friday Passion according to John. Bring your Bible, a journal or notebook, and a heart open to the Sacred Word of God.

**NO Saturday Mass at St. Joseph or St. James
on April 12th**

Fr. Brian Belongia will celebrate 20 years of priesthood on May 21.



Please pray for him.
We are grateful for his ministry to us!

DINNER AND DANCE

by Dawn Rabas

The 5th annual Dinner & Dance was another great success with a profit of **\$43,489.95**. Thank you to all the volunteers, donors, and attendees.

Next year's Dinner & Dance will be held earlier in the month, to avoid coinciding with Lent.

Mark your
calendars for
Saturday
February 7
2026

The time of the event will also be moved up one hour, starting registration at 4pm, then dinner at 5pm, the live auction at 6pm, and the band from 7-10pm. We are also moving up the time of the silent auction closings and other raffles.



175th Anniversary *continued from page 1*

gravestones in the cemetery is planned for school aged youth. Prizes will be awarded!

- A cemetery walk for adults with maps locating war veteran burials, priest's graves, and other famous or infamous ancestors
- On display:
 - ⇒ A plaque listing all the priests and pastoral leaders since 1850
 - ⇒ Stained glass pictures that were created by parishioners
 - ⇒ A historical timeline exhibit

⇒ Photo directories from the last 50 years

The success of this significant event will rely on the support of numerous volunteers. Although most leadership roles have been assigned, additional assistance will be required during the event. Volunteers are needed for various tasks including car parking, managing children's games, bartending, supporting fundraising activities, cake cutting/serving, and clean-up operations. If you are available to offer your

help for part of the afternoon, please contact Jean Schleis at 920-863-3965.

Finally, we are asking for contributions to help defray the expenses of this celebration. The tents, porta-potties, band, and bounce houses are just a few expenditures we anticipate. These could run anywhere between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Donations may be placed in the collection basket at Mass, mailed to the parish office, or made online on our website, stjamesandstjoseph.org/giving.



Our Youth Ministry program at St. James is offering three opportunities for Summer Mission trips. The trips are:

1. "Local Mission Trio" For Middle & High School Students in the Denmark area. June 21-24th.
2. "On the Road Mission Trip" for High School Students in

Charles, Louisiana, July 12-20th.

3. Steubenville Youth/Young Adult Conference in St. Paul, MN July 25-27th.

Contact YM Coordinators if you are interested or have questions.

* Deb Bradley 920-660-7124

(dbradley1115@gmail.com)

* Jessica Phillips 920-883-7357

(odyfaithenergy@gmail.com)



To help manage the expenses for these trips, we are conducting two fundraisers:

- 1) We are selling Seroogy's candy bars for \$2.00 each. They will be offered after upcoming masses. Or, you may contact Deb Bradley at 920-660-7124 to purchase.
- 2) There are three brat frys planned. Each one will be held at All Saints parking lot by the gym entrance after Sunday morning mass starting at 9:00am:

Sunday, April 27

Sunday, May 18

Sunday, June 29

We appreciate your support!



IT'S TIME FOR KIDS TO HIT THE TRAIL....FOR ADVENTURE!

by Kevin Konkol

Dear Parents and Grandparents,

At True North, the 2025 Fun & Faith Program, kids discover that they can trust Jesus in a wild world! True North is filled with awesome Bible-learning experiences kids see, hear and touch! Hands-on crafts, team building games, unforgettable Bible songs, and tasty treats are just a few of the standout activities that help faith flow into real life. Plus, we'll help kids discover how to see evidence of God in everyday life—something we call God Sightings. The kids will love the colorful decorations that bring the whole Vacation Bible School to life!

**True North VBS will run from July 14th - July 18th
from 8:30am - 11:30am**

To the Members, Parents and Youth of the Circles of Faith Catholic Community,

If you're interested in helping with this summer's Fun & Faith Program, please let us know and we'll help you find a role well-suited to your gifts and interests! The pro-



gram happens only because of 20-30 wonderful volunteers like you! Job-sharing to cover the 5 days has worked well when needed.

Please feel free to contact Kevin Konkol at 920-737-4750 or email at kevinakonkol@gmail.com with any questions. THANK YOU!!



UNDER THE STEEPLE

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ April 17-19 Easter Triduum
- ◆ April 20 Easter Sunday
- ◆ April 27 First Communion
- ◆ May 11 Mother's Day
- ◆ May 18 Grief Group, 12-2pm
- ◆ May 31 Confirmation at St. Peter the Fisherman
- ◆ June 15 Father's Day
- ◆ July 20 Grief Group, 12-2pm
- ◆ July 27 St. James 175th Anniversary Celebration

ST. JAMES PARISH
COOPERSTOWN

- ◆ Pastor: Fr. Brian Belongia
Phone: 920-272-8172
Email: fatherbrian.sjcsjk2024@gmail.com
- ◆ Deacon: Dan Gray: 920-246-4155
- ◆ Telephone: Office: 920-863-2585
Fax: 920-863-5445
- ◆ Mass Schedule:
Saturday 7:30pm
Sunday 8:00am; Live streamed on Facebook
Weekday Mass: Tuesday, 8:00am, Live streamed
- ◆ Faith Formation: Wednesday evenings,
September thru April
Grades 1 - 6: 6:00 - 7:15pm
Grades 7 - 11: 7:30 - 8:45pm


St. James
Cooperstown
www.stjamescooperstown.org