

Immaculata

.....from our parish family to yours



Vol. 16 Issue 2 Summer 2023



St. Mary's Church, Viewed From Above

The picture on the front cover of this issue of the *Immaculata* was taken last spring by a drone. It is a view that most of us would not ever get to see, at least in this life. . . . The parish church is indeed a remarkable building, from every angle. It would be a difficult construction project for 2023, it is even more difficult to imagine building it 120 years ago, without access to much of the technology and machinery that makes such projects more manageable. I would especially like to draw attention to the statue of Mary that is on the front of the church, in white. It is as if she is looking over the greater community with her protection as our spiritual mother, not only of our parish but of our whole greater extended community since 1902 when she arrived from Holland. The statue looks tiny, but it is 7 feet high and weighs 1300 pounds! (Information provided by the Cathedral on the Prairie book that we published earlier this year, pgs. 19-20.)

On August 15, 2023, the **parish church marks the 60th anniversary of its solemn consecration** in 1963. This event was a unique one that matches the uniqueness of St. Mary's Church in so many other ways. After installing a new mensa (altar top) in granite (this is on the high altar) and completing some other restorations and changes, Bishop Schladweiler, only five years into his responsibilities as the First Bishop of New Ulm, was here to consecrate the church building. This was a very involved ceremony at the time, something that would have been done after the major improvements.

This issue has a special emphasis on the parish choir. St. Mary's has had a long and storied tradition of a strong musical program both at the school and in the parish for Masses. (Just recently, I took someone up to the choir loft to show the new floor and this individual remembered having to climb the steps many times as a junior high student. At one point in time, he remembered that in a specific grade his class was in charge of providing the music for all of the funerals of the parish during that school year.) The choir that usually sings at the 9:30 am Mass each Sunday usually takes some time off during the summer, but is starting up again as we move into the new academic year. We try each Sunday to make this Mass a particularly solemn one, with incense and sung Mass parts, and I constantly receive compliments from visitors who are in admiration of what we are able to offer to the Lord's praise and glory each week!

Lastly, I would **like to acknowledge our volunteers!** We have so many who generously give of their time in so many areas that are often unnoticed. I think of the choir, the ladies who provide hospitality for funeral luncheons, the ladies who sweep the church, those who mow the cemetery, those who give their time on various committees, many volunteers at the school, money counters, those who have showed up at special projects such as when we removed the wooden floor last year before the new terrazzo floor was installed, or those who showed up to help remove the old landscaping on the south side of the church and around the rectory in early July, and those who help with the summer festival or the men's sausage dinner, those who help set up for Christmas and Easter, the CCW and KC's. It is sometimes easier to give of our resources than our time, because our time shows a real personal investment. **Yet we see such generosity in time, talent, and treasure!**

Divine Mercy Area Faith Community



Twenty-eight second graders from St. Mary's Parish and the Church of Japanese Martyrs received the sacrament of their First Holy Communion at St. Mary's Catholic Church on Sunday, May 7, 2023. Pictured in the front row (left): Emmaline Braulick, Brynnley Helget, Leo Schultz, Leonard Seidl, Emma Schmid, Kaitlyn Ziegenhagen, Rose Pietig, Quinn Cook and Brogan Braulick. Second row: Ralyn Krebs, Josie Pelzel, AlleeJane Hoffmann, Bryce Fischer, Coraline Mathiowetz, Piper Ibberson, Jack Heiderscheidt, Jack Sellner and Franco Gonzalez. Third row: Bennett Braulick, James Visser, Bristol Nachreiner, MJ Wagner, Avery Cook, Valeria Hernandez, Kayden Seifert, Preston Rothmeier, Sammy Petersen and Charles Currans. Back row: Fr. Sam Perez, Fr. Mark Steffl and Fr. Tanner Thooft.



Twenty-eight juniors from three parishes (St. Mary's, Japanese Martyrs and St. Michael's) of the Divine Mercy Area Faith Community were confirmed by Bishop Chad Zielinski on Sunday, March 12, 2023, at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Sleepy Eye. Front row (left): Fr. Sam Perez, Alexa Pelzel, Hailey Beltz, Madison Engesser, Jazzibelle Martinez, Adelinde Hoffmann, Emily Ericksen, Kenadi Heiling, Kenley Schiller, Rachel Schumacher, Grace Goedtke, Emma Fischer and Fr. Tanner Thooft. Second row: Kaleb Weiss, Riley Rutscher, Jonathan Petermann, Elle Kyllonen, Jenica Schroepfer, Cole Schroepfer, Noah Simonsen, Devin Kunkel and Fr. Mark Steffl. Third row: Bishop Chad Zielinski, Katelyn Tauer, Ellen Windschitl, Skylar Meyer, Brayden Suess, Brandon Schmitz, William Walter, Mark Anderson, Hayden Zarn and Paul Goedtke.

You may have heard a story about a young man who was married for only $\frac{3}{4}$ of a day when his new bride rode off into the sunset on the night of their wedding. While the young man from this story went on to live faithfully in the vocation of single life, Tom Hirsch ('59) and Sharon Simonsen ('70) are beyond grateful to be celebrating 50 years of marriage this year. "We're always working together," Tom said, and "the farm is a blessing" that encouraged it. Tom and Sharon were blessed with six children (Dan '92, Charlotte '94, Jacob '97, Gabe '99, Aaron '09, and Mike '14), all alums of St. Mary's just like they were, and a whole lot of humor and joy. As they put it, "We didn't plan. We let the Good Lord do it." After all, "family life is God's gift."



kids as they got older inviting friends to sing, and their son, Aaron, even conducting the choir for a time. They shared that Aaron actually played the St. Mary's version that Clara Schroepfer wrote of "The Bells of St. Mary's" on the piano from memory at the age of three and by the time he was in sixth grade, he was playing organ for the choir regularly. The love and dedication this couple has to both God and music extends well beyond their involvement in the choir.

In addition to the family band they have when getting away at the lake every summer for a full week, Sharon's

Throughout their marriage, one constant for them in conjunction with their faith has always been their involvement with the Caecilian choir. They called it "a long-standing tradition" for their families. It is impressive to think that while Tom and Sharon get to enjoy this time together as each of their children had at various times, Sharon's great grandfather sang in the same choir as did Tom's grandfather, who needed a horse to ride into town for choir practice, not to mention their parents who were also involved. Tom described how there were many times that things would come up that they couldn't control like a cow getting ready to give birth, but they always said, "Trust in the Lord... we're not gonna miss Church." Tom was in the choir since high school, and while Sharon joined after they married in 1973, they still have clear memories of their kids up in the choir loft with them (doing things that small kids do), their

gift of art has enriched the musicals their children were involved in at St. Mary's for many years. They are a part of the traveling Rosary program with Schoenstatt and have regular time for adoration. Tom and Sharon are thankful to be a part of a parish that is so supportive of parents and families and recognize the blessing it is to have a school that is their ally in nourishing the faith of their children. When asked about the advice they had for how to live out the Catholic faith, Tom and Sharon were filled with many words of wisdom. They said, "Faith is the center of our life," whether it is attending Mass together, stressing family meals which now that everyone is grown results in hours of talking when the kids come home, dedication to the choir, volunteering, or being on ALL the committees. These things – "to be an apostle in modern day life – is a hard thing to do," but when you "live with your faith, live according to the Gospel, it really is so much easier." Without a doubt, it is easy to be encouraged by the example of this couple who has shown the immense good that can come from keeping God, right where He should be, at the center of everything.

A Piece of St. Mary's History

This section is dedicated to the history of St. Mary's Parish.

By: Josh Sellner

St. Mary's Caecilian Choir

The Caecilian Choir of St. Mary's Church likely has its foundation in the beginnings of the parish. Though records from the early years are scant, it was likely begun in the early 1880s after the congregation was raised to the rank of a parish with the appointment of Fr. Bernard Sandmeyer as the first resident pastor. Fr. Sandmeyer was appointed in 1878.

According to the old parish expense ledgers from the 1880s and 1890s, the choir was under the direction of the Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester who staffed the parish school beginning in 1883. There are entries in the ledger stating that they received an organist's stipend for their services rendered at Masses, usually being paid quarterly. The first lay choirmaster

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was the person of Professor John M. Beck. He took over the direction of the choir shortly after Msgr. Wendelin Stulz arrived in the early years of the 20th century. Newspaper articles from that time period state that the choir under his direction was to sing at the dedication of the present church in 1902. His son, the talented John J. Beck, who served as the organist for the choir here at St. Mary's during his father's tenure, would go on to hold the prestigious position of organist and choirmaster at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis until his untimely death in the late 1940s. Professor Beck and his son held their positions here with the Caecilian Choir until 1908, when they left for positions in the Twin Cities. The installation of the parish's first pipe organ occurred in 1907 during their tenure here.

Mr. Henry Erdweg was hired in 1908 to assume the duties of organist and choirmaster. Not much is known about Mr. Erdweg, other than that the choir continued to develop its tradition of excellence in rendering sung Masses and other sacred repertoire. Mr. Erdweg left the parish in 1914. Mary (Bertrand) Breslin took over until the summer of 1916, when she resigned before her marriage.

In the summer of 1916, Mr. & Mrs. Peter Baltes arrived in Sleepy Eye with their family. There being no housing available in town at that time, they lived in one room of the old St. Mary's School building. There was a piano in the school and one of the Baltes children, Clara, then aged 12, would practice on the piano. Fr. James Klein (pastor at the time) heard her practicing one day and told Mr. Baltes that the organist was going to resign, and asked if Clara could take over as the organist. Mr. Baltes told Fr. Klein that Clara could probably fill in. She substituted August through November of 1916, and in November she got the job. She took organ lessons the following summer at Good Counsel Academy in Mankato. Clara would go on to be-

come the beloved and revered Clara Schroepfer after her marriage to Mr. Leo B. 'Pinky' Schroepfer in 1934. Clara was very musically-gifted and is still remembered fondly to this day (along with Sr. M. Emerentia Fink) for her dedication to the St. Mary's School music program and to the Caecilian Choir as the organist and choirmaster. Pope Pius XII bestowed on Clara the 'BeneMerenti' medal in 1958 for

her service and dedication to the Church. With that award came the title of 'Lady Clara.' Clara is deserving of much praise and credit for keeping the Caecilian Choir together and retaining its high standard of excellence through to the 1970's. Clara retired in November of 1980 after 64 years of service to St. Mary's Church. She passed away in 1988 at the age of 85.

After Clara's retirement, Jan Kral assumed the duties of organist, and a choir member, Vonnie Ibberson, took over the role of director. Vonnie continued until the mid-1990s, when another member, Ann LaCourse, assumed the director's duties. Paul Flannery took over as director in the late 1990s and continued until the mid-2000s. In the mid-2000s, the talented Aaron Hirsch, still in his mid-teens, took over some of the duties as organist, and later after Paul Flannery's departure, as director as well, sharing the

duties with his father, Tom. After Aaron graduated in 2009 and left to pursue a degree in music, Tom Hirsch assumed full responsibilities as director. Jacob Flaherty was hired in 2013 to fill the position. He served here until 2015 and was succeeded in the post by Sean Connolly in 2016. Sean remained here until the summer of 2022, when he left to take a similar position in his native Cincinnati, Ohio. Rebecca Visser assumed duties of organist and choirmaster in July of 2022, and continues in the post today, sharing some of the organist duties with Lisa Portner.

The St. Mary's Caecilian Choir is always interested in attracting more members, and would love to have anyone willing, school-age or older, who loves to sing join its ranks, so that the choir's rich legacy can continue. The choir usually sings September thru the Feast of Corpus Christi each year, with summers off. There is a quote attributed to St. Augustine that says, "The one who sings prays twice".





NATIONAL Eucharistic Congress

By Mary Gangelhoff

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops designated the Eucharistic Revival with a focus on the Eucharist and Mass after the Pew Forum (2019 survey) released results that 69% of Catholics do not believe the Eucharist is the Real Presence of Jesus Christ. Seven in ten Catholics believe that the Eucharist is merely a symbol, an encounter with an “it” instead of a “who” that is alive and transforms our lives. The first year’s focus, 2021-2022, was on the diocesan level. Now this three year journey brings us to the second year, 2022-2023, which focuses on the parish level and the task of reviving our parishioners in their love for Jesus in the Eucharist and to send them forth to share this love with others. There are four invitations for parish revival: Reinvigorate Worship, Personal Encounter, Robust Faith Formation, and Missionary Sending.

Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis states, “We want to start a FIRE, not a program.” The

Eucharistic Revival is an invitation not only for us to grow in our love for the Eucharist, but an invitation for us to personally invite and visit with people, many from our own families, about the Eucharist. It is a time to invite them to a Holy Hour, to attend a Mass, and to ignite their hearts on fire for Jesus, especially those who have fallen away from the practice of the Catholic Faith.

Many opportunities are planned for our AFC which include the four invitations. The hope is to “start a fire” in our hearts for the Eucharist. Some of these include:

- The weekly AFC Holy Hour to especially pray for different groups of our parishes along with the availability of Confession. After the Holy Hour, parishioners are invited to meet in the social room for fellowship and a short reflection about the Eucharist.
- Deliberate moments of quiet reflection after receiving Holy Communion.
- A weekly quote from a Saint on the Holy Eucharist will be sent out using the Flocknote platform.
- Bulletin feature dedicated to something related to the Eucharist. Currently, the focus is on the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy as we are called to imitate Christ. We become missionaries who “go forth and spread the Good News.”

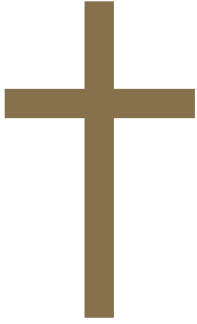
Blessed Carlo Acutis is one of the patron saints for the Eucharistic Revival. In October, each AFC parish will host a display about his life and the Eucharistic Miracles he recorded. Speakers, books, resources for our families, and small group discussions are other things that will be offered to our community.

The third year of the Eucharistic Revival, 2023-2024, is a National Pilgrimage to Indianapolis, Indiana from July 17-21, 2024. The pilgrimage begins in four areas of our country. In Minnesota, it will begin at Lake Itasca. Please go to eucharisticcongress.org for more information.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1324). St. Clare of Assisi said, “We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become.” May our love for the Eucharist grow so that we become the hearts, hands, feet, and eyes of Christ as we serve others and lead them back to Jesus.



Welcome To Our Parish



Matthew Hirsch and Chase Frahm and their
daughter Presleigh Jo

Sarah Ibarra and Spencer Reedy and their
son, Kayson

Cassidy Miller

Jeff & Paula Losleben



*Holy
Matrimony
at St. Mary's*

Chad U'Ren & Rebecca Rosenhammer
5/13/2023

Anna Lux & Brandon Berg 6/6/2023

Dominic Helget & Gianna Peschges
8/19/2023

Eternal Rest Grant Unto Them, Oh Lord...

March 3, 2023 through July 21, 2023



Bill Zilka 3/3/2023

Florian "Doyle" Sellner 3/6/2023

Mary B. Sellner 3/7/2023

Raymond Walter 3/13/2023

Steven Augustin 4/11/23

Yvonne Windschitl 4/13/2023

James Larson 5/17/2023

Earle Stevermer 6/6/2023

Lawrence L Sellner 6/7/23

Mildred Rosenhammer 6/8/2023

Glenn Berkner 6/14/2023

Joe Fink 6/20/2023

Cole Braulick 6/26/2023

Dean Braun 7/21/2023

Born into God's Family

*February 5, 2023
through August 8, 2023*



Leo Joseph & Walker James, sons of Carter & Bethany Krzmarzick

Peter Pius, son of Hunter & Sierra Brinkman

Barrett Wilder, son of Thaddeus & Megan VanZandt

Harper June, daughter of Matthew & Danielle Helget

Cairo Ezekiel, son of Jane Gelin & Francheska Montemayor

Adelyn Teresa, daughter of Michael & Elise Sprenger

Maximilian Alexander, son of Joachim & Joselyn Ferk

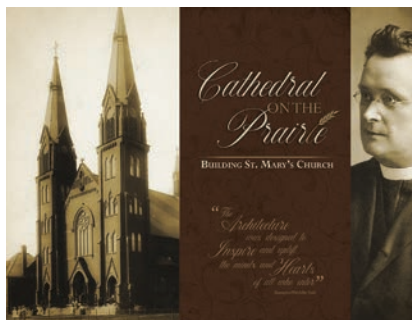
Bridget Ann Marie, daughter of Anthony & Cecilia Ferk

Monica Jean, daughter of Geoffrey & Emily Ferk

London June, daughter of Elizabeth Hoffmann

Demetrius Paisius, son of Shaun & Catherine Kober

Isaiah Jesus, son of Jesus & Stephanie Montemayor



Cathedral on the Prairie Book

\$25

This beautiful keepsake book is available
to purchase at the parish or school office
and Nex-Tu-Nu II store.

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Fr. Tanner Thooft – Associate Pastor

Fr. Sam Perez – Associate Pastor

Deacon Mark Kober - Permanent Deacon

Deacon Mike McKeown - Permanent Deacon

Rebecca Visser - Parish Liturgist

Samuel Rosemeier - Director of Religious

Matt Grausam - Business Manager

Chris Heiderscheidt - Development Director/Office Manager

Joan Windschitl - Parish Secretary

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Upcoming Events...

August

15-The Assumption of the Blessed

Virgin Mary

21-SEPS school begins

25/26-CUF Rummage Sale at

St. Michael's, Morgan

28-Women's Recollection

29-KC Auction at St. Michael's,

Morgan

29-SESM school begins

September

1-Stations of the Cross/Divine

Mercy Chaplet at Way of the

Cross, New Ulm

4-Labor Day

6-CCD begins

9-Alumni Golf Tourney

22-Marathon/Homecoming

25-Women's Recollection

25-Christian Mothers meeting

October

1-Respect Life Sunday

1-7pm Rosary Procession from

Schoenstatt to St. Mary's

7-God's Plan for a Joy-Filled

Marriage Class

17/18/19-Fall Clergy Days

22-Sausage Dinner at St. Paul's,

Comfrey

23-Women's Recollection

November

1-All Saints Day

2-All Souls Day

5-Daylight Saving Time ends

5-National Vocation Awareness

Week begins

11-Veterans Day

17/18/19-SESM HS Musical

23-Thanksgiving Day

24-Parish/School Office closed

26-Our Lord Jesus Christ,
King of the Universe