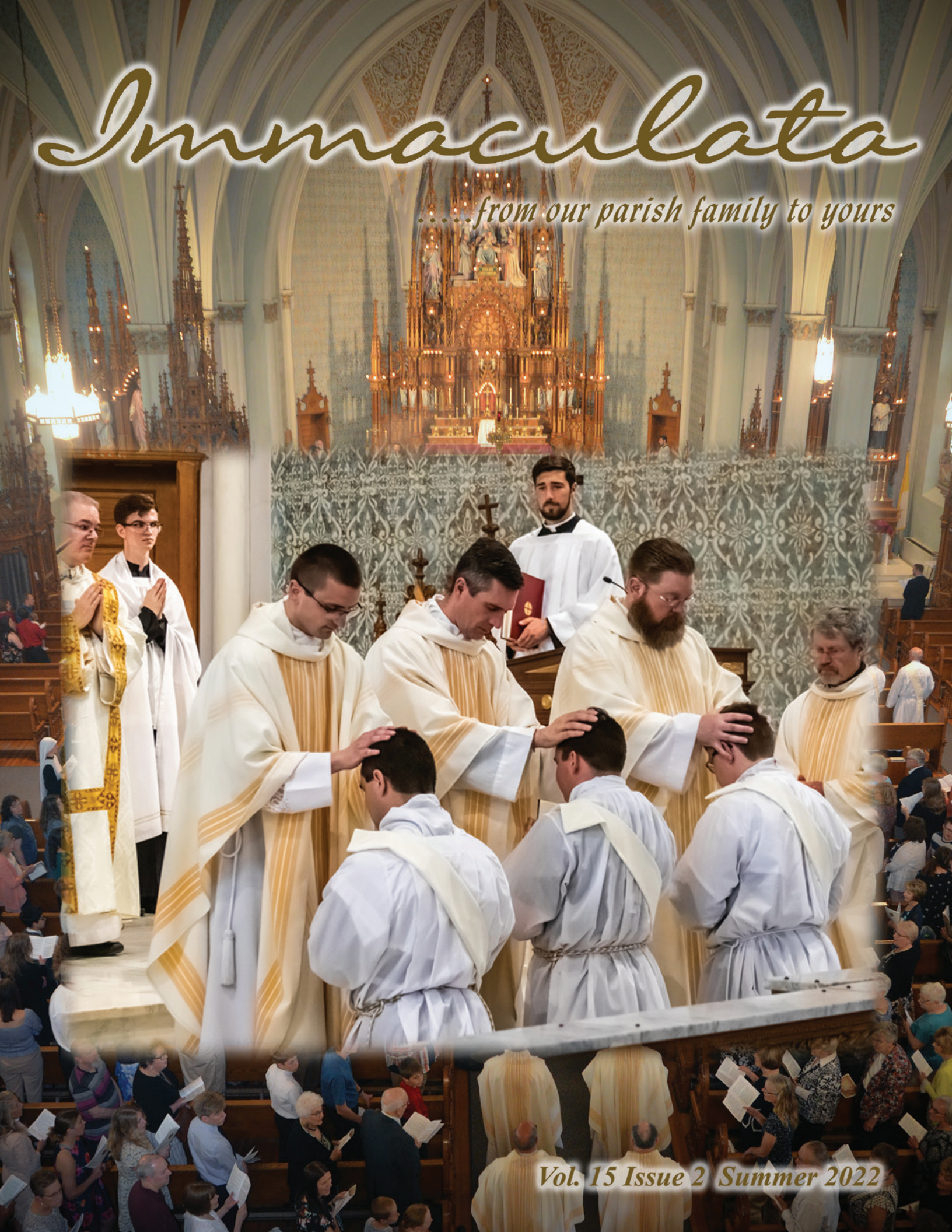


Immaculata

.....from our parish family to yours



Vol. 15 Issue 2 Summer 2022



Father Mark Steffl

A Message from Fr. Mark Steffl

We as a parish are in the midst of many projects this summer: the installation of a new terrazzo floor (which is right on schedule), tuck pointing on about 40% of the exterior with some extensive work on the steeples where they connect to the church along with completing the restoration of the remaining stained glass windows.

All of these projects put together come with a hefty price tag! Recently, someone offered me congratulations on being able to do these projects. My response to this is that the congratulations belongs not to me, but to the parishioners who have been so generous in making this possible to complete what needs to be done!

The funds to bring this work to completion were all raised in addition to a good fiscal year end (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022). These last two years, St. Mary's has ended "in the black" which has allowed us to give a much needed significant salary increase to our staff and school teachers, in addition to not raising tuition for the upcoming school year and instituting a "tuition cap" of \$10,000 for families with multiple children in our Catholic school.

A proper understanding of stewardship, the sharing of our time, talent, and treasure, comes from an appreciation that all we have is from God, and that the Lord, in His generosity has been generous to us. We are only stewards of these gifts, and will one day make an accounting of what we have been entrusted with by the Lord. (I like to say that when I have to ask for money, whether it is for the general costs of operating the parish and school, or big projects such as the ones we are working on this summer, I am asking not for myself, but for the Lord. So if someone says "no," they are not really saying "no" to me, but to the Lord...)

The new terrazzo floor is not only a maintenance improvement to replace the worn out wooden floor that we removed, but is a permanent improvement to the church. The floor allows for design, such as we will have in the main aisle, but also different colors that will be utilized

in the side aisles and under the pews to provide for some artistic contrasts. St. Mary's is blessed with a remarkable and very striking church building, very unique among the churches that are in our diocese in its size, architecture, and beauty. (This last spring, someone who was not Catholic attending a wedding here was overwhelmed with the beauty of the church, struck by the faith of those who would have built such a church "on the prairie" in a little community such as ours. He even pre-ordered the book *Cathedral on the Prairie* recently published about the construction of our church.)

Recently I read a book by Fr. Thomas Dubay, *The Evidential Power of Beauty*. (It is a book I would recommend to everyone, by the way...) In this book, Fr. Dubay speaks about how beauty and perfection leads to contemplation of the Lord, Who is the author of creation and the fullness of all that is good and beautiful. Having a beautiful church, beyond providing our parish for a place to pray, worship, and adore the Lord, is also a witness to the greater community to the Catholic Faith that binds us together as a parish. We have many visitors who comment on the church, and St. Mary's makes a lasting impression on everyone who visits! (It is so fortunate for St. Mary's that the church survived the strange ideas that caused many beautiful churches in other places to remove statues, altars, and cover up paintings especially in the 1970's and 80's.)

Once the terrazzo floor project is complete, in an effort to continue the maintenance and beauty of our church, a small section of the north wall will be painted with what is proposed as phase two. Phase two is needed to repair the cracked and damaged plaster in the interior of the church (phase 1 being the terrazzo floor and restoration of the remaining stained glass windows being accomplished this summer). Pictures are on display in the north entrance.

Thanks to everyone involved in all of these projects, and for your continued generosity and stewardship as we continue to show the Lord the depth of our appreciation for the many blessings He has bestowed on us!

A Piece of St. Mary's History

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

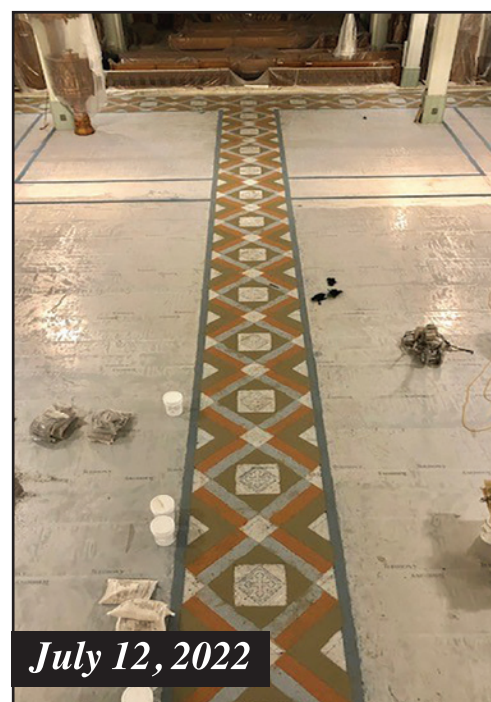
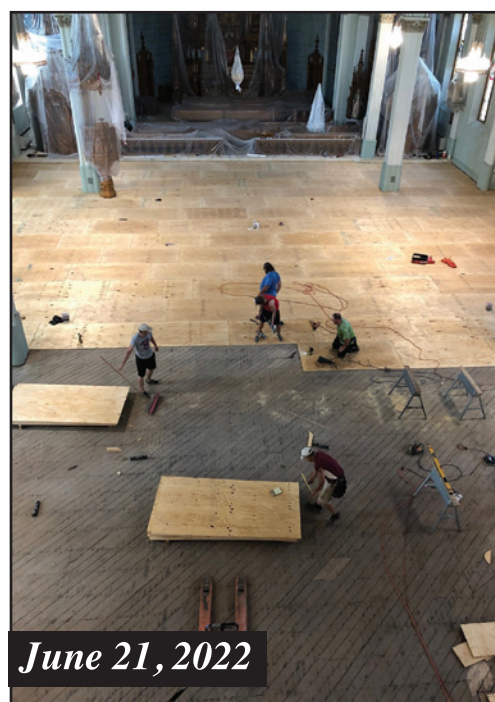
By: Josh Sellner

St. Mary's Church Floor

We often take the flooring in our buildings for granted until they need replacement. The flooring in St. Mary's church is no different. The specification for the church, drawn up in 1900, specifies that a "Yellow Pine No. 2" floor was to be laid throughout the building. It is interesting that this softwood species was chosen and not a hardwood species like oak or maple. This floor served from its installation when the church was built until 1963, when light beige asphalt tile was laid over it. The new tile was laid in preparation for the solemn consecration of the church, which happened in August of that year. The tile served us until 2000, when it was decided to remove it and refinish the pine flooring and install carpeting in the aisles.

Unfortunately, our sometimes harsh Minnesota climate

didn't get along well with the wood flooring, especially the snow and salt that gets brought in during the winter months on boots and shoes. In 2021, it was decided to remove the worn-out wood flooring and install epoxy terrazzo in its place. This flooring is 3/8" thick and is a mixture of epoxy resin and marble aggregate. It is a very long-wearing material, poured into place like concrete and then ground and polished. It will easily last for the next century and beyond. The following are photos taken thru July. The project is expected to be finished the end of August.



Parish Family Profile: Monsignor John Richter

In January of 1938, a son was born to a blended family in Bird Island, Minnesota. That son would grow up to touch the lives of many and bring joy and the sacraments to thousands of people. But first, they had to sort out the actual birth date of John Andrew Richter.

"For a number of years, I celebrated it on the 21st because, when I was born, Dr. Crosiff would just go to the courthouse occasionally to report births. You know, just probably remembered them off the top of his head," Monsignor Richter laughs. "He and his wife had a baby around the same time and he got the two dates mixed up!"

The Richter family, in fact, had many birthdays to celebrate as the family represents three coming together to make one. William Richter's first wife and three children died in a hot water tank explosion leaving him the sole caregiver for the other three surviving children. He met Clara Gromack (maiden name Majeski), whose husband had also passed away; she had one daughter. William and Clara married and had six more children together of whom John was the fourth, ranking eighth in the overall line-up. Both parents were holy and wholly devoted to their family and faith.



Photo by Kathy Sonnek

"My mother was Polish but never wanted to admit that she was Polish until we got a Polish pope," he chuckles. As for his dad, every Sunday, he attended two Masses: One at 6am with his wife and then by himself with all ten kids in tow at 10am. Later in the afternoon, the couple would go to back to the church for the rosary and other devotions.

It was when he made his First Holy Communion that Msgr. John felt a pull toward the priesthood. At the age of 11, young John's dad passed away from a type of blood illness that was never defined. During the three previous years, William was given 164 blood transfusions, all donated by family, friends and the community. Despite their efforts, the family was soon fatherless with Clara at the head, six children still at home, and money tighter than before.

"We always say we were poor but we didn't know it," monsignor says. "Even though we had so little money, I think my dad was still as generous as he could be. And they instilled that in all of us. To share what you have."

Living on \$78 a month on Social Security, the family was happy to take on any paying job to support themselves. They would do whatever was asked, like delivering papers, babysitting, and working in the fields. "We'd pull mustard (weeds). We'd pick up stones. We'd detassel corn. In the fall of the year, we'd be out picking up corn. We'd get five cents a basket," he recalls.

Clara waited until after the youngest, Kathleen, was in school to pick up a job in the school lunch program.

Monsignor Richter at-a-glance:

Confirmation name: William (after his dad)

Favorite book: *Story of a Soul: The*

Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux

Favorite Ice cream flavor: Butter brickle

Favorite saints: St. John Vianney, St.

Philomena, St. Therese of Lisieux

Birthday: January 20, 1938

Date of Ordination: February 22, 1964

Favorite way to relax: Praying

Favorite color: Green

Favorite liturgical season: Easter

When not in school or working, the family remained generous with their limited free time. Because they lived a convenient block-and-a-half distance from the church, Sr. Rosemary, who was in charge of the altar boys, would frequently call to get help with the 40 Hours Devotions, or when other servers didn't show, or when a visiting priest needed someone to assist with Mass. "And the answer was always yes," monsignor says.

Then as before, their family spirit remained strong, praying and sharing family meals together. In 1952, the young man found himself at Nazareth Hall Preparatory seminary in St. Paul. Monsignor John points to three priests who were especially influential in his vocation: Father Francis Neumann, a hometown vocation; Father Stephen Adrian, priest, and Fr. Mark Otto, pastor, at St. Mary's, Bird Island. Of Father Otto, he says, "What always touched my heart was

to see him praying the Stations of the Cross every day.” Father Adrian would give him money for books and the occasional ice cream. “All of them gave me such a strong love for the priesthood and love for serving the people,” he says. “They were very devout in celebrating the Mass and the sacraments – very kind and generous.”

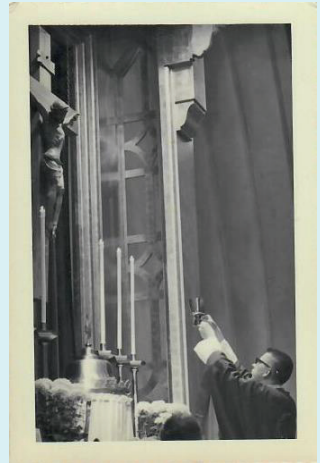
Soon the day of his ordination to the priesthood arrived: February 22, 1964. It was Minnesota. It was winter. It was - surprisingly - without snow for the entire season. The ground was bare, as it was in Lisieux, France, 74 years earlier when Saint Therese of Lisieux made her profession of vows and asked the Lord for snow as a sign of His favor. She got it. As for the newly-ordained Father John, “I came out of the church after the ordination and the ground was covered with a blanket of snow,” he says. “And what I found in this is God saying, ‘Unworthy though you are, I accept you as a priest. I want you to be my priest.’”

Today, this 84-year-old with 58 years of priestly service under his belt continues to be faithful to his calling even in “retirement.” He celebrates one Mass a day for the residents of both the villa and nursing home (down from two per day at the height of Covid), leads the rosary and Litany of the Blessed Mother before each Mass, offers the Sacrament of Reconciliation every First Friday and, four times a year, offers the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick for all residents who need it.

The devoted priest of God has a couple key phrases that attentive parishioners will likely remember. One is “Give God the time, and He will give you the time” and “I’m never going to ask you to do what I myself would not do.” This includes making time for prayer, giving as generously as possible of one’s time and talent and doing little loving things to lighten another person’s load, just as Jesus would do.

Today, one of those simple kindnesses included a run to the Aldi’s grocery store. Monsignor John had asked the kitchen supervisor at the nursing home if they needed anything because, as he observed, when you buy off the supply truck, you can pay \$15 for a watermelon that is \$3.88 in the store. So he went on a mission to Aldi’s. “People saw my grocery cart and they said, ‘What are you going to do with all those bananas? I had 40 pounds of bananas!’” he laughs. “They don’t have the personnel to be able to go... so I just do it, because I like to.”

By Kathy Sonnek



What Others are Saying about Him:

“Monsignor Richter has a beautiful and kind heart. He is very good about checking in with me at gatherings to see how I am really doing and to give me encouragement. It has been edifying for me to see him in prayer, besides the scheduled Holy Hours at our priest retreat, praying the Rosary or Stations of the Cross each day.”

-Father Paul Timmerman

“Monsignor Richter is a holy priest who always loves God and His people without ceasing. He is kind and compassionate to everyone. He is so good to me every time I meet him and a good example and model to the priests. He is a great treasure to the Church and especially to our Diocese of New Ulm.”

- Father Bruno Santiago

“What I appreciate most about Msgr. Richter is his dedication to his prayer life and his love for celebrating the Sacraments for the people. He has a deeply compassionate and loving heart, especially for the suffering, and God’s mercy shines very brightly through him in the confessional. One of my most moving memories of Msgr. Richter when I was his assistant is when he would find me in the church after his Holy Thursday Mass, and he would prepare some warm water and kneel down and wash my feet. It was deeply moving for me to have this seasoned pastor kneeling before me, a young and inexperienced priest, who was probably a pain in the neck for him sometimes, washing my feet in service. Monsignor Richter is a man with the priestly heart of Jesus, and I pray that I will have his priestly heart someday.”

- Fr. Matthew Wiering

“I am grateful for his work at Divine Providence. He has always been very attentive to the needs of the elderly and the dying. In every assignment that he has had, he has always put himself completely into it. A diocesan priest needs to be good at many things to be successful: fundraising, overseeing building projects, administration of schools and programs, good in preaching, relatable to his parishioners and, above all else, prayerful and virtuous in his example to his parish. He was successful in all of his assignments in all of these areas. I was able to learn these things myself from his example, being with him for my year as a deacon in the seminary and then for five years after I was ordained, and I consider those years to be very formative to my own life as a diocesan priest.”

- Fr. Mark Steffl

2022 ST. MARY'S PARISH SUMMER FESTIVAL





St. Mary's Parish Summer Festival was held on Sunday, August 7. We were blessed with another great event as many came together to enjoy the day filled with festivities for all ages. Thank you to the Council of Catholic Women's festival committee for their hard work in organizing this event and to all the volunteers who helped in any way to make it a wonderful success!

Three Ordained at the Church of St. Mary, Help of Christians



On Saturday, May 28, 2022, St. Mary's Church was filled with approximately 650 people as three deacons Joshua Bot, Tanner Thooft, and Nathan Hansen were ordained priests by Bishop Emeritus John M. LeVoor during a 10 a.m. Mass here. A lunch prepared by St. Mary's Catering Service was served in the church social room following the ordination.



Welcome to St. Mary's

St. Mary's, along with the entire Divine Mercy Area Faith Community, is excited to welcome Fr. Tanner Thooft who will serve as associate pastor (parochial vicar) and Rebecca Visser who will serve as the Director of Music. We are grateful to have them here.



Cathedral on the Prairie

by Michael Sellner, Class of '89

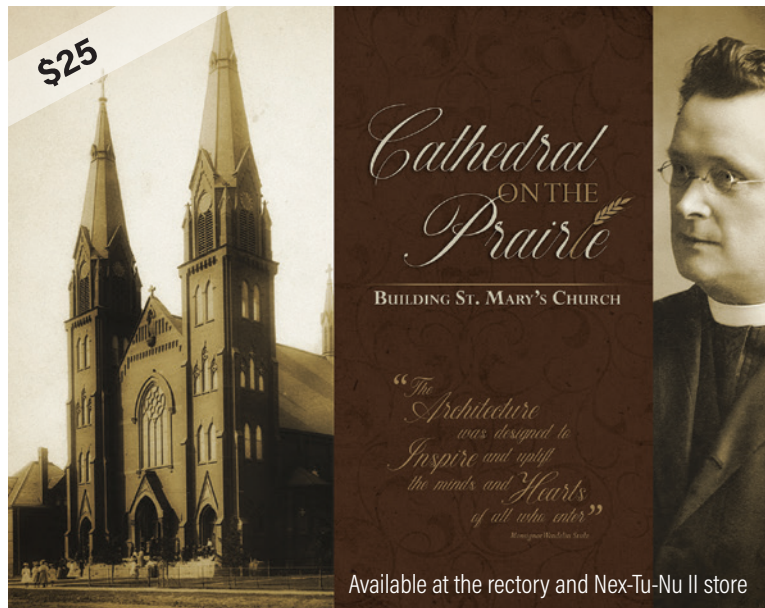
St. Mary's Church and Parish holds a very special place in my heart. When I am in the presence of the Church and on the parish grounds, I always have the sense of being home. What a tremendous sense of belonging instilled in this alumnus. I've always been awestruck with the imposing structure that is St. Mary's Church. The steeples rising above the prairie, the exquisite craftsmanship of the furnishings, the intricate detailed carvings of the statues, the overall majestic interior decorations, and the stunningly detailed stained glass windows ... it truly is a sight to behold.

I've often thought it would be fascinating to step back in time and witness the building process and the community effort involved in achieving such a grand endeavor. I've often wondered who the priest was that had such a profound vision for his small congregation on the prairie. To satisfy that curiosity, I began researching and soon discovered some fascinating and detailed information. With each new article, document or photo uncovered, an intriguing story started emerging. As I continued my research, I felt I was being called to do something with the material, needing to somehow give it back to the community that blessed me during my 12 years of Catholic education at St. Mary's Schools. After much

prayer and discernment I finally understood the calling ... to compile the information into a book, which with the help of many generous parishioners, became "Cathedral on the Prairie." It is remarkable what the parish priest, Monsignor Wendelin Stulz, along with his faithful congregation, accomplished through the grace of God.

If you haven't purchased a book, please consider adding this keepsake book to your collection. The book is a beautifully crafted picture book detailing the building process, the church furnishings, the stained glass windows, the original interior decorations and the ceremonial events surrounding these historic events of St. Mary's Church. The text is a compilation of the original building committee minute notes, colorful newspaper articles and factual historical information written by Rev. Francis Schaefer. The book showcases 55 fascinating and intriguing historic photographs, with a total of 123 photos supporting the

text. The book, 12 years and roughly 900 hours in the making, is my gift to the parishioners and alumni of St. Mary's in appreciation and gratitude for all the blessings bestowed upon me during my time as a student, Mass server and parish member. How privileged the parishioners of St. Mary's are to have such a grand edifice for their spiritual services. How thankful we must all be for the tremendous sacrifices the pioneer parishioners endured as they built the "Cathedral on the Prairie."



TIM FRANCIS PRESENTS

SIGNS FROM GOD

~ MIRACLES AND THEIR MEANING ~

From altar boy to party boy; From non-denominational mega church back to the Roman Catholic Church.

Tim Francis shares with us his quest for truth.

Watch Tim explain what this is all about on this short video:
www.ScienceTestsFaith.com/StMary



October 12th and 13th
St. Mary's Catholic Church
 636 1st Ave. N.
 Sleepy Eye, Minnesota 56085
6:30 PM - 9:00 PM

For the Wednesday Oct 12th
 Event bus transportation will be provided from St. Michael's, Morgan to St. Mary's for Catechist, their parents and parishioners.
 Meet in the back of the school at 5:40 PM.



First Holy Communion

Thirty-one 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 1, 2022. Pictured in the front row (left): Jackson Meyer, Lillian Schwartz, Wyatt Schauman, Sara Seifert, Cooper Braulick, Clara Lax, Maya Murphy, Presley Pierson, Reese Schroepfer, and Isabella Seifert. Second row: Avery Steffl, Alexa Silva, Madison Hoffman, Tessa Armbruster, Berkeley Brandl, Blake Braulick, Maxx Krzmarzick, Adam Tauer, Emmett Weiss, Jada Schauman, and Jay Schultz. Back row: Fr. Mark Steffl, Fr. Zachary Peterson, Jonah Sellner, Brennan Severson, Jaxon Schroepfer, Anthony Braulick, Joshua Moldan, Daniel Moldan, Benjamin Helget, Samantha Sellner, Jacob Trevino and catechist, Karri Hoffmann.



Divine Mercy AFC Confirmation

Thirty-four juniors from the Divine Mercy Area Faith Community were confirmed by Fr. Mark Steffl on Sunday, March 13, 2022, at St. Mary's Church in Sleepy Eye. The Divine Mercy Area Faith Community consists of four parishes: St. Mary's, Sleepy Eye, St. Michael's, Morgan, St. Paul's, Comfrey and Japanese Martyrs, Leavenworth. Front row (left): Gracie Sellner, Mykenna Vollmer, Abbie Hacker, Emily Helget, Lacey Mathiowetz, Isabella Hoffmann, Samantha Ibber-son, Allison Labat, Annika Nosbush, Keanna Hultquist, Kallie Zarn, Abigail Schwartz and Evelyn Schumacher. Second row: Kaleb Wait, Maverick Weber, Elizabeth Schwint, Lauren Welter, Teresa Larsen, Kaden Ryer, Christian Surprenant, Kenadi Steffl, Presley Dockter, Matthew Fischer, Jeremiah Veerkamp, Fr. Mark Steffl, and Fr. Sam Perez. Third row: Fr. Zachary Peterson, Brandon Tauer, Colten Roiger, Colton Dauer, John Miller, Jake Heinrichs, Jaci Domeier, Chase Beltz, Braydyn Romsdahl, Conor Strong, Owen Weiss.

Welcome To Our Parish



Sean & Kimberly Bishop and
sons, Connor & Jacob



Barbara & Ronald Dietl



Jon & Rebecca Visser and sons,
Lucas, James, Thomas, Peter &
Joseph

Elaine Briggs; Daniel Swedzinski (no photo provided)



Holy Matrimony at St. Mary's

Dale Sellner & Kelly Burden 4/30/2022

Hunter Moore & Victoria Anderson 5/21/2022

Born into God's Family

February 14, 2022 through July 31, 2022



Marie Chantal Elia, daughter of Adel & Rose Elia
Griffin Lyle Bloedow, son of Jacob & Katie Bloedow
Elsie Renae Salfer, daughter of Scott & Abby Salfer
Maria Bridget Fischer, daughter of David & Jennifer Fischer
Crue Allen Braulick, son of Cyle & Lindsay Braulick
Josie Louise Hoffmann, daughter of Jesse & Emily Hoffmann
Mya Madilyn Weiss, daughter of Kevin & Danielle Weiss
Graham Leonard Mathiowetz, son of Sean & Karlie Mathiowetz
Leo David Pietig, son of Jeffrey & Caitlyn Pietig
Gigi Kay Trebesch, daughter of Austin & Justine Trebesch
Bianca Winifred Docter, daughter of Andrew & Abeni Docter
Benedict James Hagen, son of Anthony and Maria Hagen

Eternal Rest Grant Unto Them, Oh Lord...

February 2, 2022 through August 5, 2022



Doug Ibberson 2/2/2022

Barbara Marso 2/21/2022

Greg Groebner 3/2/2022

Loren Blick 2/28/2022

Shari Krebs 2/28/2022

Annette Johnson 3/7/2022

Dorothy Haala 4/25/2022

Rita Schleisman 4/29/2022

Richard Callanan 5/6/2022

Patricia Soukup 5/10/2022

Frances Swedzinski 5/19/2022

Mary Ann Broich 5/22/2022

Gloria Sellner 5/27/2022

Rosella Windschitl 8/5/2022

St. Mary's Catholic Church

636 First Avenue North

Sleepy Eye, MN 56085

Phone: 507-794-4171

www.divinemeracyafc.org

Email: saintmaryse@sleepyeyetel.net

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID

PERMIT NO. 36
Sleepy Eye, MN 56085

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Parish Staff:

Fr. Mark Steffl – Pastor

Fr. Tanner Thooft – Associate Pastor

Fr. Sam Perez – Associate Pastor

Deacon Mark Kober - Permanent Deacon

Deacon Mike McKeown - Permanent Deacon

Rebecca Visser - Director of Music

Samuel Rosemeier - Director of Religious Ed

Matt Grausam - Business Manager

Chris Heiderscheidt - Development Director/Office Manager

Joan Windschitl - Parish Secretary

Immaculata Contributors:

Father Mark Steffl,

Joan Windschitl, Josh Sellner,

Chris Heiderscheidt, Kathy Sonnek

Laura Laechel - Graphic Design

Photo Credits:

Jason Schutz

Schutz Creative Photography,
Luverne, MN;

Mary Woitas, Kathy Sonnek

Cover photo and ordination photos
by Jeanine McMahon Photography



Upcoming Events...

August

5- Stations of the Cross/Divine
Mercy Chaplet, New Ulm

7-Parish Festival

14-Rosary Procession from
Schoenstatt to St. Mary's

15-The Assumption of the
Blessed Virgin Mary

21-Movie Night "Pray: The
Story of Patrick Peyton"

22-SEPS school begins

23-KC Corn Feed

29-SESM school begins

September

2-Stations of the Cross/Divine
Mercy Chaplet, New Ulm

5-Labor Day

7-Religious Education (CCD)
begins

8-The Nativity of the Blessed
Virgin Mary

10-SESM School Alumni
& Friends Golf Tourney

16-Marathon for non-public
school education

20-CCW Fall Gathering

27-Installation of Bishop Chad
Zielinski, the 5th bishop to
the New Ulm Diocese

October

2-CCW Recognition Sunday

7-Stations of the Cross/Divine
Mercy Chaplet, New Ulm

9-CCW Mission Brunch

9-St. Michael's, Morgan
Beef Dinner

12/13-Tim Frances speaks on
'Signs from God'

15-God's Plan for a Joy-
Filled Marriage Class

23-St. Paul's, Comfrey
Sausage Dinner

November

1-All Saints Day

2-All Souls Day

6-Day Light Saving Time
Ends-turn clocks back 1 hour

18/19/20-SESM HS Musical

24-Thanksgiving Day