

Christ is our Hope

MARCH 2019
DIOCESEOFJOLIET.ORG

PROTECTING
CHILDREN
The Broader Picture
of Protecting Children
from Abuse

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY
Totus Tuus Offers
Summer Fun for Children

LAST WORD
Bravery and the
Pro-Life Movement

*Cristo es nuestra
Esperanza*



FIT SHEPHERDS

A Community of Disciples Growing in Faith and Fitness

ABORTION, NEW YORK STYLE



BY BISHOP
R. DANIEL
CONLON

WOMEN ARE EQUAL TO MEN AND DESERVE TO BE TREATED AS SUCH.

But even fundamental principles can be carried to extremes.
That is what happened recently in the state of New York.

Its legislature recently passed a law that permits abortion, essentially for any reason, right up to the moment of birth. The governor signed the bill with enthusiasm, and the World Trade Center gleamed with pink lights.

The law not only allows very late-term abortions. It permits medical professionals other than doctors to perform them. It eliminates previous provisions to assure medical care for babies who survive an abortion. By declaring the procuring of an abortion a “fundamental right,” it opens the door for forcing private, even religious, hospitals to allow abortions. Strangely

enough, it will no longer be a crime to kill a child in the womb through an act of violence against the mother, perpetrated by another party, like a husband or boyfriend.

We live in a society that routinely commends and rewards people for helping others who are in distress. The Medal of Honor routinely goes to someone in the military who has bravely come to the aid of a fallen comrade in harm’s way. Can you imagine a child, having been struck

by a car, lying in the street, and people just driving and walking past without doing a thing to help? Yet, children in the womb are intentionally killed every day, and New York has just removed every restriction. Indeed, some New Yorkers, and others elsewhere, have celebrated the liberalization.

Unfortunately, the support nationwide for legal abortion in the first trimester has remained about the same over the years, around 60 percent. But that drops to less than 15 percent for the third trimester. I believe that there is an innate recognition that what a woman carries in her womb is a child, a human person. We routinely talk that way: “When is your baby due?” “Here, you can feel the baby’s heart beat.” “Careful now. You don’t want to hurt the baby.” Abortion is the antithesis of the natural, normal, maternal instinct.

Jesus did not address abortion, as far as we know, since the practice was prohibited among the Jews. But the Romans not only tolerated abortion, they allowed for infanticide. An unwanted newborn was simply left exposed to the elements and wild animals. New York has come close to that.

The Catholic Church’s consistent opposition to abortion is at the heart of its respect for human beings as children of God. Just as Jesus reached out to the defenseless and rejected people of His time, His true followers welcome and assist similar classes of people in our time. Politicians and others who support the right to abortion are not happy with the Church’s vocal position. News reports routinely speak of our “anti-abortion” stance rather than “pro-life.”

I am very grateful to those who take an active role in standing up for the right of unborn children to live. Some pray outside abortion clinics. Some are engaged in the political process or advocate in the public forum, including the marches in Washington, D.C., and Chicago. Some just give witness to the truth in more private settings. I am also grateful to those women who carry their children to term despite personal hardship or adverse prenatal diagnosis.

Abortion is a critical issue, not just because of how horrific it is itself, but because it represents graphically the general decline of moral, religious values in our society. This latest setback for the safety of unborn children is limited to New York (which, by the way, chalks up the highest rate of abortions by far in the United States). Yet, will other states follow suit? Illinois?

Some people criticize me and other bishops for not doing enough to combat abortion. There are about 300 active-duty Catholic bishops in the country. No matter what we say or do, it will never be enough. Others need to speak up and act. The Holy Spirit dwells in every baptized person. Confirmation gives all of us the powerful seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit. Together we can easily outmatch the New York legislature or any other human force — but by positive means, not negative. †

“
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH’S
CONSISTENT OPPOSITION
TO ABORTION IS AT THE
HEART OF ITS RESPECT
FOR HUMAN BEINGS AS
CHILDREN OF GOD.
”

POR OBISPO
R. DANIEL CONLON

LAS MUJERES SON IGUALES A LOS HOMBRES Y MERECE SER TRATADAS COMO TAL.

Pero incluso principios fundamentales pueden ser llevados a los extremos.

Eso es lo que ha sucedido recientemente en el estado de Nueva York.

La legislatura aprobó recientemente una ley que permite aborto, esencialmente por cualquier razón, hasta el momento del nacimiento. El gobernador firmó la ley con entusiasmo, y el Memorial de las Torres Gemelas brillaba con luces de color rosa.

La ley no sólo permite abortos de embarazo avanzado. Permite que profesionales médicos aparte de doctores los realicen. Elimina disposiciones para asegurar la atención médica para los bebés que sobreviven un aborto. Al declarar la obtención de un aborto un "derecho fundamental," abre la puerta para obligar a hospitales privados, incluso religiosos, a permitir abortos. Curiosamente, ya no sería un crimen matar a un niño en el útero a través de un acto de violencia contra la madre, por otra parte, como un esposo o novio.

Vivimos en una sociedad que habitualmente encomia y recompensa a las personas por ayudar a los demás que están en peligro. La medalla de honor va habitualmente a alguien en las fuerzas armadas que valientemente ha venido a la ayuda de un compañero caído en peligro. ¿Te imaginas a un niño, después de haber sido golpeado por un coche, en la calle y sólo conducir y pasar sin hacer algo para ayudarlo? Sin embargo, los niños en el vientre intencionalmente son asesinados cada día, y Nueva York acaba de quitar cada restricción. De hecho, algunos neoyorquinos y otros en otros lugares, han celebrado la liberalización.

Por desgracia, el apoyo a nivel nacional para el aborto legal en el primer trimestre ha mantenido sobre el mismo durante los años, alrededor del 60 por ciento. Pero que se reduce a menos del 15 por ciento para el tercer trimestre. Creo que hay un reconocimiento innato que lo que una mujer lleva en su vientre es un bebé, una persona humana. Habitualmente hablamos de esa manera: "¿Cuándo nace tu bebé?" "Toque aquí, puede sentir el corazón del bebé." "Mucho cuidado. No quiere hacerle daño al bebé." El aborto es la antítesis del instinto maternal natural y normal.

Jesús no hablo del aborto, por lo que sabemos, ya que la práctica era prohibida entre los judíos. Pero los romanos no sólo toleraban el aborto, permitían el infanticidio. Un recién nacido no deseado simplemente lo dejaban expuesto a los

elementos y animales salvajes. Nueva York ha llegado cerca a esto.

Oposición constante de la iglesia católica al aborto está en el centro de su respeto por los seres humanos como hijos de Dios. Así como Jesús se acercó a la gente indefensa y rechazada de su tiempo, sus verdaderos seguidores reciben y asisten a clases similares de personas en nuestro tiempo. Los políticos y otros que apoyan el derecho al aborto no están contentos con la posición vocal de la iglesia. Informes de prensa hablan rutinariamente de nuestra posición "contra el aborto" en lugar de "por la vida."

Estoy muy agradecido a aquellos que tomen un rol activo en la defensa del derecho de los bebés no nacidos para vivir. Algunos oran fuera de clínicas de aborto. Algunos participan en el proceso político o abogan en el foro público, incluyendo las marchas en Washington, D.C., y Chicago. Algunos sólo dan testimonio de la verdad en entornos más privados. También agradezco a aquellas mujeres que llevan a sus niños a término a pesar de dificultades personales o diagnóstico prenatal adverso.

El aborto es una cuestión fundamental, no sólo por lo horrible que es en sí mismo, sino porque representa gráficamente la decadencia general de morales y valores religiosos en nuestra sociedad. Este último revés para la seguridad de los bebés no nacidos se limita a Nueva York (que, por cierto, tiene las más altas tasas de aborto en gran medida en los Estados Unidos). ¿Sin embargo, seguirán otros Estados? ¿Illinois?

Algunas personas me critican a mí y otros obispos por no hacer lo suficiente para combatir el aborto. Hay cerca de 300 obispos activos en el país. No importa lo que digamos o hagamos, nunca será suficiente. Otros necesitan hablar y actuar. El Espíritu Santo mora en cada bautizado. Confirmación nos da a todos los siete dones poderosos del Espíritu Santo. Juntos fácilmente podemos superar la legislatura de Nueva York o cualquier otra fuerza humana, pero de manera positiva, no negativa. †

“
OPOSICIÓN CONSTANTE
DE LA IGLESIA CATÓLICA
AL ABORTO ESTÁ EN EL
CENTRO DE SU RESPETO
POR LOS SERES HUMANOS
COMO HIJOS DE DIOS.
”

LENTEN GUIDELINES

■ Those 14 years or older are to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent. Everyone older than 18 and under 59 are to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. On these two days of fast and abstinence, only one full meatless meal is allowed. Two other meatless meals, sufficient to maintain strength, may be taken according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted on these two days, but liquids, including milk and fruit juices, are allowed. When health or ability to work would be seriously affected, these regulations do not oblige. All the faithful also are strongly urged to perform works of charity and mercy and to follow a program of voluntary self-denial and serious prayer.

Statement from Bishop R. Daniel Conlon Concerning Theodore McCarrick

I am gratified that the Holy See has acted to resolve the status of Theodore McCarrick, former Archbishop of Washington. Dismissing him from the clerical state is a dramatic yet seemingly appropriate outcome.

McCarrick's history — how he continued to be promoted and held in regard and who knew of his crimes along the way — still needs to be uncovered and made public. Appropriate care for his many victims also must be provided. I join many others in seeking God's assistance in bringing this painful chapter in the Church's history to a conclusion.

Joliet Franciscan Nun Honored for Her Work with the Will County Criminal Justice System

■ Sister Vivian Whitehead, OSF, was recently honored by the Will County Bar Association for her many years of service to the Center for Correctional Concerns (CCC), a not-for-profit agency she began in 1979. The plaque was presented to her by Christian Spesia, president of the Will County Bar Association, and Richard Schoenstedt, chief justice of Will County.

In his comments, Chief Justice Schoenstedt said he was a first-year law clerk when he met Sister Vivian at the jail. At that time, the jail was located in the basement of the Will County Courthouse. He remembered seeing Sister Vivian speaking to the offenders through the bars of the cells and thought to himself, "This is no place for a woman — and let alone a nun!"

What also stood out in his mind was her tenacity, and that "she never took 'no' for an answer." Thankfully, because of her determination and perseverance, Sister Vivian was able to begin the CCC, a social service organization that provides education, social services, chaplaincy, lifestyle intervention and outreach.

Chief Justice Schoenstedt also made it clear that, "Sister Vivian is in no way retiring any time soon!"

During the award ceremony, Sister Vivian was very gracious and noted that the award also belonged to two other groups, namely the Joliet Franciscan Sisters and the members of the CCC. She added, "While being educated to become a college professor, one of our assignments was to reach out to someone who was incarcerated. Well, that changed my life completely. From there on, I only wanted to go to jail!"



↑ Sister Vivian Whitehead, OSF, holds her award and is surrounded by other Sisters and Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate (Joliet Franciscans) who were present at the ceremony.

The Joliet Franciscan Sisters have had a long history of helping the incarcerated. They were present at Statesville Penitentiary as far back as 1877. "It is part and parcel of who we are as Franciscan," said Sister Vivian.

As for all the members of the Center for Correctional Concerns, she went on to say, "Every member of CCC walks with those who are in jail. They are present, and they know that the offender is more than the offense. Miracles happen, and your life changes every day when you walk with those who are in jail."

She concluded by saying, "I give thanks to these two groups, and I am honored to be a part of them."

Additional commendations were also presented to Sister Vivian by State Senator Pat McGuire, State Representative John Connor and Will County Board Speaker Denise Winfrey. Joliet Mayor Bob O'Dekirk was unable to attend; however, he did send a commendation on behalf of the City of Joliet.

— STORY AND PHOTO BY LUCY SANCHEZ

St. Dennis Parish, Lockport, Has Begun Masses in Spanish during the Second Sunday of Each Month

■ St. Dennis Parish, in Lockport, is welcoming people to its newly created Hispanic ministry in a journey of faith and cultural diversity. According to a recent press release by the parish, the ministry "prepares us as a welcoming church to better recognize, embrace, and promote the many gifts and talents that the Hispanic community brings and shares in the life and mission of the Church, and in our society. Pope Francis has commissioned us to be missionary disciples, to be an 'Iglesia en salida' ('the Church in Mission')."

With that in mind, Father Jim Curtin and Deacon Guadalupe Villarreal are inviting people to participate in Masses in Spanish during the second Sunday of each month at 1:30 p.m. The parish will also offer Quinceañeras planned to be celebrated in 2019. In addition, students accepted and transferring from public school will be eligible for tuition discounts and scholarships at St. Dennis School.





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WOMEN OF THE WAY

Diocese of Joliet

*invites all Women to a night of
Adoration + Refreshments + Conversation
with Fr. John Horan*

**"THE MIGHTY ONE
HAS DONE
GREAT THINGS FOR ME."**

ST. ANTHONY CATHOLIC CHURCH
7659 W SAUK TRAIL,
FRANKFORT, IL 60559

MARCH 31, 2019
4:00 PM - 6:30 PM



My vocation starts with the love and support of my parents, Ray and Kay, and my sister Laura. I went to Waubonsie Valley High School and the University of Illinois to study Spanish before I heard God's call to become a priest. I was attracted by the opportunity to draw closer to God in prayer and share His grace and love in the Sacraments. Six years later, it is a joy to be ordained a priest! On June 20th, 2018 I moved to my first assignment: St. John Paul II Parish in Kankakee and Hispanic Ministry in Immaculate Conception /Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Gilman!



EMAIL: womenoftheway.doj@gmail.com // FACEBOOK: WOW-Women of the Way

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REMINDER: If you haven't
done so yet, please read, or
listen to, Bishop R. Daniel
Conlon's pastoral letter on
missionary discipleship, which was
in the November 2018 issue of the
magazine by going to this site:
www.dioceseofjoliet.org/bishop/



Not JUST the Suffering

Never the Cross Alone; Always the Cross and Resurrection

When we say Jesus died for our sins, we think of the cross and the suffering Jesus endured. We too easily assume, then, that God needed someone to suffer to make up for our sins. To believe that God's mercy and forgiveness required the Son's blood presents an image of a very severe God. Such a belief glorifies suffering and diminishes God's mercy.



The theology that sometimes leads to a sense of God being overly demanding came from St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). Anselm was trying to express the compassion of God who was willing to forgive sinners provided atonement was made to restore God's honor. Anselm wrote in a time of fiefdoms and lords. The lord's honor was not a matter of egocentric control. Honor was the foundation for an orderly civic life.

Anselm devised a satisfaction theory of atonement. God had been dishonored by our sins and, consequently, God's honor had to be satisfied. And satisfaction could be made only by one with equal status to God — namely, a human who was also divine.

CATHOLIC LIFE



FATHER JOHN WELCH, O.CARM.,
is on the Board
of Members at
Joliet Catholic
Academy.



**Jesus' life
and suffering
put a mirror
to our lives.
He showed
us the way
to unselfish
love of our
brothers and
sisters.**



Our takeaway from Anselm's atonement theory has been that the suffering of Christ satisfied the Father's honor and atoned for our sins. This understanding, that Jesus had to suffer before God would forgive us, has taken hold in Christianity. It has led to a distorted emphasis on suffering and made God's mercy conditional.

The motive was love

God's mercy never depended on Jesus' becoming flesh and enduring the trials of humanity. Our sinfulness did not summon God from heaven (as though we had that power over God). God's forgiveness is generously bestowed. The basic motivation for the Incarnation was the love of God for all God's good creation. God chose to be with us, and our world, out of love.

Franciscan theology held this viewpoint for centuries. Franciscan friar, Blessed John Duns Scotus, in the 13th century, taught that, even if there had been no sin, there still would have been the Incarnation. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, in a general audience, cited Duns Scotus, saying he *"reaffirmed that the Incarnation is the greatest and most beautiful work of the entire history of salvation, that it is not conditioned by any contingent fact but is God's original idea of ultimately uniting with himself the whole of creation, in the Person and Flesh of the Son."*

Salvation

Never the cross alone; always the cross and resurrection. Jesus' suffering on the cross was not wanted by Jesus nor willed by God. Jesus was crucified because He faithfully announced the reign of God. It was good news for all, especially those who were left out, excluded, and without voice. His words and witness, and His many followers, were a challenge to authority. Doing His father's will, and upsetting religious and civic leadership, was what led to the cross.

Jesus' life and suffering put a mirror to our lives. He showed us the way to unselfish love of our brothers and sisters. His death on the cross showed us that love, in whatever form, will require sacrifice. Jesus did not love suffering; He suffered because He loved. He joined us on the human journey with its celebrations as well as its tragedies. The cross tells us that there is no place so dark that God cannot be found there.

We are saved by the life, death, and *resurrection* of Jesus, the Lord. The resurrection is testimony to the power of God to bring light and life into even the darkest experiences. Here is our salvation! God's word of love will always be the last word. And in the resurrection, Jesus is the last word of God, the complete self-definition of God. "In Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him God was pleased to reconcile to Himself all things" (Col. 1:19, 20). ✝

SPOTLIGHT ON

Catholic Charities'
Counseling ServicesSTORY BY
MAGGIE SNOWCATHOLIC CHARITIES
PROVIDES A RANGE OF
THERAPEUTIC SERVICES FOR:**Children and Adolescents**

Counselors provide individual and family counseling for children and their families. Staff is trained in a variety of specialties, including the following: adjustment issues, attachment disorders, oppositional and defiant behavior, conduct problems, school difficulties, social skills deficits, and childhood depression and anxiety.

Couples Counseling

Staff is trained and experienced in providing marital therapy, pre-marriage evaluations and counseling.

Adults

Counseling staff has broad experience working with adults who are experiencing the following: anxiety, depression, life transitions, experiences of loss and bereavement, interpersonal difficulties, and developmental disabilities.

Family Counseling

The Counseling Program offers family counseling in conjunction with child and adolescent counseling.

Catholic Charities' Counseling Services also provides numerous counseling groups; consultation and education; and school counseling.

Most insurance is accepted.
Please call 815.723.0331 to inquire.
Special accommodations can be made to individuals and families who are struggling financially and who qualify for services at a reduced fee.

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet, provides outpatient counseling in DuPage, Will, Grundy, Kendall, Kankakee, Ford, and Iroquois counties. Individual, group, family, and couples therapy are offered, in addition to specialized services, such as anger management groups and preventative education programs.

Each client has different challenges, strengths, and goals. The following are true stories from individuals who are currently seeing Catholic Charities counselors. (Please note that names have been changed to protect anonymity.)

Yaz and her husband are raising two high-energy toddlers who present behaviors that their parents find challenging. Feeling overwhelmed and frustrated, Yaz began receiving counseling services from Catholic Charities to help build her self-esteem. She is also learning skills and techniques to cope with her children's behavior in a positive way. This young mother is motivated to create the best home environment possible and isn't afraid to ask for support and resources. Counseling is helping her family dynamic evolve in a positive direction.

Spencer and Mason have lived with their grandfather since their mother passed away several years ago from an accidental drug overdose, and their father is incarcerated. The boys have been seeing a Catholic Charities' counselor for two years as they work toward overcoming their difficult circumstances. Their grandfather and their counselor are helping to create a better life for the boys than their parents had. Today, Spencer and Mason are both doing very well and enjoy their counseling sessions.

Jordan and her two daughters entered a Catholic Charities' housing program after a period of homelessness. Jordan has a mental health diagnosis and a developmental disability, both of which create challenges in her day-to-day life. She also had very low self-esteem, no driver's license and was not working. With

access to a Catholic Charities' counselor, Jordan is focused on improving her quality of life. Her family now lives happily in a two-bedroom apartment, and they no longer worry about where they will sleep each night.

Matthew, 8, and Doug, 10, are the youngest of six siblings. Their parents are divorced, and

three of their siblings have a diagnosis of autism. The boys' mother is their primary caregiver and contact with their dad was recently cut off due to a criminal matter that he is involved in. To help cope with their complicated family situation, Matthew and Doug are seeing a Catholic Charities' counselor. With help from their counselor, the boys have been able to process very difficult circumstances.



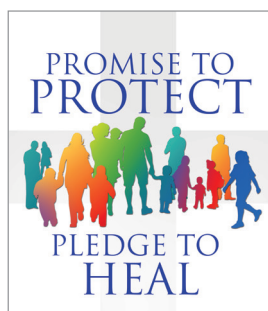
TO LEARN MORE,
VISIT [CATHOLICCHARITIESJOLIET.ORG/SERVICES/COUNSELING/](https://www.catholiccharitiesjoliet.org/services/counseling/).
TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT, CALL 815.723.0331.



The Broader Picture of Protecting Children from Abuse

PROTECTING CHILDREN

Perla Freed found a deeper appreciation of what it takes to protect young people — and how dioceses in the United States are going about it compared to the rest of the world — after taking a course called Safeguarding of Minors in Italy a couple of years ago.



The course, paid for by the Archdiocese of Atlanta, where she works and holds the title of director of the Office of Safe Environment, was a semester long, held from October 2017 until February of 2018. Classes were taught at the Pontifical Gregorian University in

Rome. She was only one of three lay people who took the course at the time and the only one from the United States; the majority of the students were either priests or nuns. In all, 18 people participated at the time, from 14 countries.

"We, in the United States, are way ahead when it comes to child protection efforts compared to other countries in the world," said

Freed, who is originally from Honduras. "That was obvious during week one of the program."

She pointed out that the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People has been in place in the United States for almost 20 years now. According to the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Charter "is a comprehensive set of procedures originally established by the USCCB in June 2002 for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The Charter also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. It was revised in 2005, 2011, and 2018."

"We are in an era when we have had policies and procedures in place with the charter in every diocese for years," Freed said. "Some countries have not even written up any policies whatsoever in terms of child protection. It's not something they are working on, or there's no plans to do so. It's all tied to the culture where child rights are not even a thing yet."

Some of the countries represented in Rome during her coursework included those who came from Africa, India, and the Middle East.

She mentioned that in third-world countries it is often common for children to not go to school, because they are working to help their households financially, and so what dioceses in those countries face are "different realities" in terms of the mindset regarding child protection, which means it becomes complicated when the Church tries to put together a child abuse prevention program there.

"We live in a bubble compared to other countries," she said.

"It was eye-opening for me, and I was very grateful for the fact that I got to learn about this and be more



Perla Freed

STORY BY
CARLOS
BRICEÑO

SPOTLIGHT ON Protecting God's Children Program

The Diocese of Joliet's has an office set up to implement policies regarding the sexual abuse of minors, which is in conformity with the provisions from the U.S. bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Essential Norms for Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors.

This policy is to ensure appropriate response to allegations of the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by clergy, seminarians, religious, employees and volunteers. It addresses preventing sexual abuse through education and screening, reporting abuse, providing pastoral assistance to persons affected by abuse and the processing of allegations.

The program the diocese uses as part of its child sexual abuse prevention goal is called Protecting God's Children, which is offered by VIRTUS, the brand name that identifies best practices

programs designed to help prevent wrongdoing and promote "rightdoing" within religious organizations.

According to VIRTUS' website (<https://www.virtusonline.org/>), the Protecting God's Children program helps "churches and religious organizations refine their roles as child-safe environments and empowering caring adults to protect children" by implementing "safety mechanisms that send a message to all abusers and potential abusers" in the following ways:

- **Child abuse is not tolerated,**
- **Children are vigilantly protected,**
- **Victims are listened to, heard, and shielded from further abuse, and**
- **Offenders are identified and punished.**

sensitive on diversity and culture because our diocese is very diverse.”

She admitted that it's important for the Church to be a leader in the matter of child protection, especially in the parts of the world where child rights are not considered important. Leaders in Rome are starting to understand that, which led to the creation of a course by the Pontifical Gregorian University, which began last October, in which the semester-long course that Freed took was expanded into a two-year licentiate course in protecting minors.

Freed is grateful for the time she spent in Rome taking the class because it has influenced her to see a broader picture about protecting children and also the importance of collaborating with other organizations in the community who interact with children.

“I’ve reached out to the community to get involved with other child-youth organizations, like the Boy Scouts and the Girls and Boys Clubs, to see what they are doing so that way organizations are sharing resources and communicating with each other what we’re doing so that way we are on the same page,” she said.

SOME STATISTICS

Regarding Protecting God’s Children Workshops and Background Checks in the Diocese of Joliet

5,677

Total number of sessions hosted since the program began (2003-2018)

262

Sessions hosted in calendar year 2018, including English, Spanish, Polish, Korean, American sign language

3,241

Adults trained in calendar year 2018

YOUTH (GRADES K-12):

52,073

Number of youth enrolled in religious education classes and/or at Catholic schools who received safe-touch training in audit year 2017

— This training was conducted via religious education programs, Catholic schools or public schools.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

831

NEW employees and clerics having fingerprint background checks in calendar year 2018

- Background checks are updated **EVERY 5 YEARS**.

MORE THAN 23,000

Total volunteers working with minors during audit year 2018, who have been trained and background checked

- In 2015, the Diocese of Joliet began implementing **INTERNATIONAL BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR SEMINARIANS** who are immigrating to the U.S.



If you, or someone you know, has been abused by a cleric or employee of the Diocese of Joliet, contact the victim assistance coordinator at 815.263.6467. For more information, go to <http://dioceseofjoliet.org/ct/sectioncontent.php?secid=13>

According to the website, “By utilizing best practices for training and loss prevention, the Protecting God’s Children program helps make churches safe for all people — especially children. Maximizing a church’s role as a child-safe environment begins with making adults more aware of the ways children and adults interact with each other. The Protecting God’s Children program educates and trains adults (clergy, religious, teachers, staff, volunteers, and parents) about the dangers of abuse, the warning signs of abuse, the ways to prevent abuse, the methods of properly reporting suspicions of abuse, and responding to allegations of abuse.

The website continued: “All VIRTUS training programs, including the Protecting God’s Children programs, are comprehensive and multi-dimensional — incorporating proven best practice standards for the prevention of child sexual abuse by clergy, staff, volunteers, and others who inter-

act with children within the church environment. [The] training programs incorporate live training, train-the-facilitator education, awareness videos, and ongoing web-based training through online training bulletins and training modules via [the] VIRTUS Online system. For any organization, the best practice to prevent wrongdoing, including child sexual abuse, is to have an organization use its own people to facilitate awareness of the issue. The Protecting God’s Children program begins with the training of internal facilitators, individuals selected by the archdiocese, diocese, or religious organization to train other adults and parents

on how to best protect children. [The program] use facilitator-led [three-hour, live] awareness sessions and continuous online training so that participants learn the best methods for delivering their message, including the training for the Protecting God’s Children program.” †





FIT SHEPHERDS

COVER STORY

A Community of Disciples Growing in Faith and Fitness

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS MORE CHALLENGING:

waking up at 5:40 a.m. every Saturday morning or dealing with the extremes in the weather — the hot days during the summer or the freezing days during the winter. But, in the end, I don't mind those minor obstacles because I look forward to Saturday mornings like a kid looks forward to Christmas.

The reason is simple: early Saturday mornings is when I work out with a group called Fit Shepherds.

**STORY BY
CARLOS
BRICEÑO**

This group has done wonders for my levels of physical, and spiritual, fitness. And, equally important, it has opened the door for me to belong to a community of guys who hold me accountable to be a better man and have inspired me in my faith journey.

These are guys I've laughed with, cried with, prayed with, shared with, sweated with and froze with. We have become a community whose dedication to improving ourselves physically and spiritually has inspired me as a missionary disciple and transformed my rela-

tionship to my parish, Our Lady of Mercy in Aurora, where Fit Shepherds was born.

What is Fit Shepherds? It's a group, founded last April by Father Mark Bernhard, Our Lady of Mercy's dynamic and athletic parochial vicar, with the support and blessing by the parish's pastor, Father Don McLaughlin, that works out for about 45 minutes on the parish grounds and adjacent park district land every Saturday morning. The workouts are then followed by 15-20 minutes of faith sharing, which is then followed by a short period of fellowship.

To listen to some of these sessions, go to this site:
catholicsportsandfitness.org/multiplying.html



 This is another in a series of articles about Missionary Discipleship in response to Bishop R. Daniel Conlon's recent Pastoral Letter on the Need for Missionary Disciples in the Diocese. If you haven't done so yet, please read or listen to the bishop's pastoral letter in the November 2018 issue of the magazine by going to this site: www.dioceseofjoliet.org/bishop

My aim with this article is two-fold: to give you a deeper understanding of how this group has impacted some of the members' faith journeys, but also to encourage men in parishes across the diocese to consider forming a Fit Shep-

herds' group at their church, with their pastor's blessing, of course.

Except for the several times

I've had family obligations or been sick, I've gone to every workout since Fit Shepherds started. That means I — and usually, on average, about

30-40 other guys — show up by the 7 a.m. start of the workout. These workouts are usually very tiring, very creative and can be modified so that, if you can't complete the workout leader's requirement for that weekend of, say, 150 squats, then you do as many as you can.

Each week, a different leader dreams up a grueling routine for us to follow, which means every week is never the same. What's involved includes variations on squats; burpees; shuttle runs; runs up a steep hill in back of the church, which the guys affectionately call "Purgatory Hill;" sit ups; push-ups; arm circles (which is often mocked by the guys, but is a favorite because of the ridicule factor); planks; bear crawls; mountain climbers; and so on. One creative leader even had us carry heavy wooden pallets as we jogged. Another had us use a gallon of water as weights.

The goal during these 45 minutes is to push our bodies and get a great workout in. However, these

workouts are not about egos inflating or competitive juices flowing. Instead, they are about building a brotherhood.

When I see other guys, who have also had a long week at work, wake up that early and are sweating just like me, I feel a camaraderie that

comes from belonging to a team that is on a mission.

When you hear the laughter, as the jokes start flying around, you know that joy is present. When you see several guys run back to run next to guys who are lagging at the end of a long run to keep those laggards company, you realize these guys care about each other.

When you know these guys are trying to get to know Christ more intimately, through sharing their thoughts on a Bible reading or praying for each other, I realized that this is a community of joyful Catholics on a mission together.

Community, in Latin, mean "shared together." We, as Church, need more of this. We need more joy. We need more sharing. We need more caring.

We also need more disciples.

And this word — disciple — is the key to what makes this group so necessary. Disciple means learner, and Father Mark, working in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, realized this when the seed of the idea for the group was planted

several years while he was a seminarian. Back then, he envisioned a group of men working out on the church grounds, leading them to learn how to be better men and to grow as disciples.

Last April, when praying about his homily for Mass during the weekend of April 22, Father Mark linked the Gospel reading on that Sunday — about Jesus declaring He is the Good Shepherd who is ready to lay down His life for the sheep, in order to protect them from the wolves — to the seed of the idea that was planted in him as a seminarian.

Here's part of what he said during that homily:

"There's a crisis of good men in our world today. The standards that society hold for men seems to keep getting lower and lower and lower. We, as a society, have bought into the mantra that men will be men, boys will be boys. ... There's a strong, strong narrative out there that lends to the idea that faith, religion, a relationship with Jesus — that's a woman thing. Raising kids in the faith, that's a mom thing. Taking kids to church, mom's job. ... This narrative that is so strong leads to the idea of thinking that it's ok for men to objectify women. ... This narrative lends to fatherless homes, or at least to being absent. ... A new narrative needs to be created. So what's the solution? I suggest that we work out together. ... Meet me next Saturday in the church parking lot at 7 o'clock to work out. Those of you who have played sports growing up know that there is a special bond that is formed together when you work out with others, especially with men. ... The goal is what? The goal is to write a new narrative. The goal is to transform the culture. To raise up better men for our society. To raise up better men for our families. Ultimately, to invite guys who are not of this fold to a life-changing encounter with Jesus."

The following Saturday morning, around 70 guys showed up. I was one of them. In the weeks that followed, he started asking guys to step up to lead the workouts and to lead the spiritual component at the end of the workouts.

Throughout all this, Father Mark's leadership resulted in a logo being created; t-shirts with the name and logo on it made and distributed

To find what some previous workouts have included, and also to find out more information about Fit Shepherds, go to: olmercy.com/fitshepherds



Father Mark Bernhard

To listen to the homily in its entirety, go to: soundcloud.com/user-316586154/2018-04-22-fr-mark-4th-sunday



FORMING SHEPHERDS, ONE WORKOUT AT A TIME

ABOUT FIT SHEPHERDS:

Fit Shepherds aims to have every man in our community be in the best physical and spiritual shape of their lives.

Fit Shepherds are formed through demanding workouts, fraternity, and discipleship.

WHY FIT SHEPHERDS?

"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep" (John 10:11-13).

There is a crisis of good men in our world. Entrenched in our culture and society is a narrative that contributes to men living as a hireling, not a shepherd. The hireling undertakes menial work for little pay. He has little care for what he does. He is bored. Therefore, when the wolf comes, the hireling flees, abandoning the sheep. The sheep, without their leader, are forced to scatter and perish.

Fit Shepherds are men striving to model their lives after the Good Shepherd rather than the hireling. Fit Shepherds are tired and fed up with the narrative that encourages the man to scatter when life gets hard. We are men who strive to lay down our lives in a sacrificial way for our families and community.

Due to the strong narrative that lends to men being hirelings, a Fit Shepherd knows he can't do it alone. He needs brothers. He needs other men to go to battle with. He needs to know he has other men alongside him in the trenches — both during the workout and in the day-to-day grind. The wolf will come; his goal is to scatter and destroy. Will you be a hireling and flee, or a Fit Shepherd who sacrifices his life? Join us for a workout! Men of all physical levels are welcome!

WHO IS A FIT SHEPHERD?

Any man 14 years and older who wants to be better. To be in better shape; to be a better son; a better husband; a better father; a better brother; a better neighbor. A Fit Shepherd wants to model his life after the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. A Fit Shepherd not only wants this for himself, he wants this for his brother; he demands this of him.



among the guys; we stay connected through a Groupme app, which allows us to share information (if prayers are needed, for instance) or to share inspiration or if someone needs help; the workouts have expanded to include a half-hour session, followed by prayer, starting at 5:30 a.m. on Wednesday mornings, before the Fit Shepherds head off to work; we already have had a family-building event: a Mass was held last December after a workout that our families were invited to, and then after the Mass, the Fit Shepherds served a breakfast meal that we had prepared to all the families present.

Father Mark's intentions have been clear: to lead us to be healthier — spiritually and physically — but all as part of a tight-knit, but welcoming community of disciples.

He's taught us about *Lectio Divina* (Latin for "Divine Reading"), which is when you read a passage from Scripture several times and meditate upon it so that it becomes like prayer when you share your thoughts on it. He taught us to use a technique called WRAP, which stands for Write a Scripture verse or word that hits home to you; Reflect on what the text means to you; Apply what the word or text is saying to you in your life; and Pray by responding to God with praise, thanksgiving or a petition.

Another fruitful avenue for discipleship that has sprung up has been a relationship between the group and Daybreak, the homeless shelter run by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet. One Fit Shepherd member is Pete Kinsella, Catholic Charities' senior development officer, who suggested to Father Mark that some of the men and their family members

could help prepare and serve meals during the first Sunday of every month. Since last September, Manuel Cordero, another Fit Shepherd, has been instrumental in organizing the group's volunteers to help serve at Daybreak.

Father Mark has seen the positive impact on the men at the parish.

"It's easy to roll over in today's culture and society," he said. "I see Fit Shepherds having brothers right by their side, saying to them, 'Dude, don't roll over. I'm tempted to roll over things, but here I am in the trenches with you.'"

He's also seen a positive impact on himself.

"I have a bunch of number of Fit Shepherds in my phone that I text and receive support from," he said, which also strengthens him to not roll over because he's in the trenches, too.

He's seen guys step up since the group started and take on leadership roles at the parish — giving witness talks at Mass or becoming leaders for Alpha gatherings — which is one of the outcomes he was hoping for in forming the group.

"We're trying to be conscientious for the group to serve the community, building missionary disciples," Father Mark said. "A shepherd is a missionary disciple, and we want to launch them to be missionaries to transform the culture. We believe Fit Shepherds can do that." ■



TO WATCH

a short video about Fit Shepherds, go to <https://bit.ly/2lwGrie>.

TO LISTEN

to a podcast about the group, go to <https://bit.ly/2EoCKqR>.

TO INQUIRE

about Fit Shepherds, or to ask for help in starting a group at your parish, contact fitshepherds@gmail.com.



NOW THAT YOU HAVE SOME UNDERSTANDING OF THE GROUP, IT'S TIME TO READ DIRECTLY ABOUT THE KIND OF IMPACT THE GROUP HAS HAD ON THE MEN:



■ **JOEY SHAMET,**
who is 18 years old:

In my life, I don't have many people I can look up to since my family has a lot of problems. I don't have those role models. Here, at Fit Shepherds, the majority are adults, and they're

great men I get to look up to. When I was younger, I didn't have people I could look up to. Now I do, and I'm trying to become a better man. I have guys I can look up to and see what a good man looks like.

■ **MARK CRNICH:** After you've gone through a strenuous workout with other men, it's much easier to sit down, catch your breath, and talk about God. You know that the guy sitting next to you after the workout has a certain level of dedication and toughness — as well as a love of God — and because of that, you can bare your soul a bit with that man. The dynamic at work in Fit Shepherds is very similar to being part of a sports team: respect must be earned through hard work.

But once it's earned, you develop a great deal of mutual respect and trust in the men on your team, and this frees up space to talk about faith, being

better men, and other important topics that would be hard to discuss merely in passing with another guy. So, the second way I've changed is growing in fellowship with the men of Our Lady of Mercy parish and then using that fellowship as a vehicle to grow in faith, both communally and personally.



Simply being around other men of faith — men whom I respect and admire — has in itself been a boon because it sends the message, "Hey, you're not the only one seeking the Lord. You're part of a community of seekers. And you'll help each other along the journey." Just like how you want to show up and participate in the physical aspect of a workout, you then start to want to deepen your faith to be able to more fully participate in the faith aspect of the group. The beautiful thing, though, is that you're not growing your faith in competition with anyone — rather, you're growing your faith in cooperation with everyone.



■ **ERNESTO PACHECO:**

Men are active, adventurous, physical, by nature, but we are also very cerebral by nature as well, and deep down we want that relationship with Him, but we don't want to ask anyone how to do

it. We want to figure it out on our own because it is Satan that wants to make us individuals (i.e., Diabolos = Scatterer), but then Jesus (Yeshua = Jesus = Savior = Gatherer) wants to unite us and embrace us so we can love one another like He loves us. That is what Fit Shepherds does, and it is powerful!

As a father, it has done a lot for me, so much that my six-year-old son sees how much I like it, and he had been on me for months for me to bring him to the workouts... So I did! I don't bring him every week, but I am very proud of him when he comes.

■ **MAREK MOCARSKI:** I haven't been a member of a gym or played any sports for a long time. It's been over 12 years. I got married, and then we had our first baby. Then it was work and then not enough money. And then not enough time. I prefer to watch TV or drink beer with my friends. I was always looking for an



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— MARK
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“WITH A GROUP LIKE THIS, YOU CAN ACHIEVE GREAT THINGS.”



excuse. I also gained some weight. It was time to do something about it.

I have to be honest with you, from the beginning [being part of Fit Shepherds] has been very hard. But when you see a passion, a commitment, the hard work that everyone puts into this, it inspires me.

Many times, I feel like I want to give up out there. But then I see Father Mark or some other Fit Shepherd running up to me, give me five, and say, “Hey, good job.” I just keep going. It’s amazing. ... After the whole week of work, after the struggles with life, with the struggle with everyday problems, I can’t wait until Saturday morning. I come here, and through hard work, exercise and fellowship, I leave all that baggage here. So when I leave Fit Shepherds, I feel great. I feel I can face another week.

With a group like this, you can achieve great things. After months of Fit Shepherds, I’m in better shape. But I also have grown up spiritually. I am closer to Jesus.



■ JIMMY CANNING:

I’ve grown deeper in my appreciation for penance, for sacrifice and for offering up those sacrifices to Jesus and to Mary for some good in the world – that notion of, not intentional suffering, but taking any

kind of every day suffering and offering it up. Everyone here in Fit Shepherds is very intentional about that.

■ JOE SCHMITT: The biggest change in me has been the acknowledgement that I am putting more effort into my faith. It’s beginning to start to show in my family life. It’s beginning to show in how my kids are viewing church and God and their faith. I feel like since starting Fit Shepherds I’m slowly getting to the level that my wife is putting in her faith. I don’t think I’m there yet, but I have hope for what the future for what my faith will become.



■ PETE KINSELLA: [The group] was just what I was needing. The timing was perfect. Like many of us, there are times when I am working on growing my relationship with Jesus and then times when I am in a rut. Last year, right after Lent, I was in a rut. I was attending Mass, but there were times that I missed with no excuses. My prayer life was a bit stagnant. Then came Fit Shepherds. Since my first workout in May, the leadership, inspiration and support provided by Father Mark and the camaraderie with my Fit Shepherd brothers, my relationship with Jesus is growing. Mass attendance is now a priority again, and my prayer life has improved. I now teach 4th grade religious education at

Our Lady of Mercy and encouraged [others] to add service [serving meals at Daybreak, a homeless shelter] as a component of the Fit Shepherds’ ministry.



“MY PRAYER LIFE WAS A BIT STAGNANT.”

■ **JEFF GULLETT:**

I've gone to other men's workout groups in the early morning, and the thing that keeps me coming back to this one is the faith component. It's the fact that I'm not only trying to get physically fit and not only trying to work out, but I've got brothers who are helping me and pushing me along, but there's a love for the Lord. We are doing this for one another; we are doing this to glorify God. At the end, when we are all together and lift up prayers, and we share, that's what keeps me coming back.



■ **DAN MAXWELL:**

My involvement at Our Lady of Mercy was low prior to Fit Shepherds. We didn't regularly go to Mass. We didn't participate. It didn't feel like a community. Before, it was more of an obligation. It was something we did. We went to Mass and went about our days.



Now, I feel a part of something. I also realize I have [three] kids, and I have to be a good role model and be part of their spiritual growth, not just my own. ... I have always tried to live right, but now I have support to help out when things are struggling or challenging.

■ **STEVE MORES:** The group really gets your thought process going in your faith journey. [It reminds you that] you should have that private relationship with Jesus on your own. But hearing other guys talking about Jesus makes it more natural rather than a scary thing. I used

to be afraid to read the Bible on the airplane. I thought people were going to make fun of me. I don't care now. You start talking about it to people more, trying



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to share your faith, not in a Bible-beating type of way, but in a questioning way. "Are you Catholic or Christian? Tell me a little bit about your faith journey." I have those conversations now, which I never used to have.

■ **CARL BERG, who**

is retired: I'm coming to church more, three days out of five week days. I'm here at the 8 a.m. Mass. Before Fit Shepherds, I just went to Sunday Mass. That was it. I hear other guys talk about their faith and how they've gotten better. Well, I need to get better too. One of the ways is I try to go to Mass as many mornings as I can.



■ **BRIAN KIBLER:**

As a dad, my daughters see me take the time to get up and go do this early on Saturday mornings and it's really reinforced to them that we need to have spiritual relationships with some accountability and spending time with some other folks in that environment to better ourselves. I encourage them to look for those kinds relationships.



■ **MATT PARCELS:** I'm not necessarily the most vocal person, and I'm not necessarily the most open person, but I have drawn so much from listening to others. And I have learned so much from Father Mark and from the thought-provoking and quiet silences [during the meditation period after a Bible passage has been read]. I've been able to apply that. He's given us Bible passages to read [after the workouts] and think about, and I find myself calming myself down, slowing life down a little bit, and reflecting on not just getting into the moment in a secular way, but in a religious, God-based Christian way, where I'm saying, "Come, Holy Spirit, deliver me some peace and some calm here." It's helped in a lot when I feel a lot of anxiety and frustration stuck in traffic or whatever; I can feel a change. I definitely can feel a change.



**"I DEFINITELY
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■ **MANUEL CORDERO**, who coordinates Fit Shepherd volunteers at Daybreak, a homeless shelter: My personal growth as a man comes down to the very definition of being a Fit Shepherds: “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Joining Fit Shepherds has refocused my definition of what it

means to be a man — one that sacrifices for others. I feel I’ve become a more understanding person at work, a better husband and father at home and a better neighbor serving others.

■ **ALEX BAIER**: I’m in sales, and I have the same group of customers for a little over five years. I’ve probably been to dinner with this one guy [a client] over 25 times over five years. It’s always small talk. [Alex decided to introduce a deeper subject, faith, based on the confidence of growing in faith as a Fit Shepherd, even though he didn’t know if the client was a Christian. It turns out he was.] We went down this path, talking about some of his beliefs and thoughts. We got the point where he took out a napkin, and I gave him a pen, and he was drawing his beliefs on the importance of prayer and God. [Before Fit Shepherds, Alex said he didn’t have the confidence to start a conversation like that, but now he does because of the faith-sharing that goes on after the workouts.]



see how it is vital to other people who are part of my community, and that helps me to know that I’m not alone — that we are trying to be better community members, better parents, better Christians, better husbands. I see that a lot of us try to do that, and it’s an encouragement.



■ **JESSE PERALES**: I’ve worked out my whole life, since I was a kid. After I got married, I put on 30 pounds. I work out four or five times a week, but I don’t push myself like I should. This group holds me accountable, and it

pushes me to another level. The fellowship has been amazing, just being around men of God — God soldiers I call them. Men that are an example, not just in fitness, but they’re beasts in life.

■ **JONATHAN O’BRIEN**: I never knew a single person [at church] prior to being part of this group, and now I have formed friends. I feel like this has given us a sense of community that we never had at Our Lady of Mercy.



■ **JOHN BAIBAK**: This morning Father Rocky on Relevant Radio said, “You cannot love what you do not know.” I look back on so much of my life, I expected something more from God without putting in the effort. I listened too much to the lies and myths the secular world had on our faith, without taking time to know the Truth. As a pew warmer, I expected it to come easy to me just by being present. Now, the more

I dive into the Catechism and Scripture, the more I love our faith. The rich history. The background on our beliefs. The trials, doubts, and tribulations the saints have gone through. The rock the church was founded on. God has always been there waiting for me to stop, come to know Him and love Him. ■



■ **JORGE MURILLO**: As a man of faith, we have our ups and downs. When we share some of those Scripture passages [during the times when the group shares faith after a workout], I realize that I’m not alone in this journey, and I see how my faith is vital to me and my family, and I



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Mary's Squad Inspires Women through Faith and Fitness

INSPIRATION CAN BE A POWERFUL MOTIVATOR.

Just ask Juanita Pacheco and Elizabeth Vazquez, friends and parishioners at Our Lady of Mercy in Aurora.

Their husbands — Ernesto Pacheco and Jorge Murillo — are members of Fit Shepherds, and they would hear how much the men loved being part of the group.

"I felt like I was missing out," Elizabeth said, adding that she remembers wishing that she had that kind of community, along with a fitness element, with other women at the parish, "because when you have kids, you stop taking care of yourself as much as you should."

Several months after Fit Shepherds started last spring, Juanita and Elizabeth became inspired enough to start a female faith-and-fitness equivalent to Fit Shepherds — called Mary's Squad.

"I was searching for something to help me deepen my faith and to continue to strengthen and grow it," Juanita said.

They decided to hold the workouts on Saturday mornings, after the Fit Shepherds' workouts ended, so that any wives of Fit Shepherd members could hand their children off to their husbands, for them to watch the kids.

Sometimes, even some of their children participate.

"My youngest daughter likes to come and participate, and I love being able to share that with her," Juanita said. "She's nine years old."

Father Mark Bernhard, parochial vicar at Our Lady of Mercy and founder of Fit Shepherds, appreciates that the women were inspired

to start the group.

"I'm encouraged with the woman's component of workouts," he said. "I'm really excited with the community and fellowship and women growing in their faith through fitness that can take place with Mary's Squad."

One way the women share faith as a group during their workouts is to recite the rosary while walking along the Waubonsie Creek Trail near the parish grounds.

"I have always been shy about evangelizing," Elizabeth said. "It's not something I did growing up. It was different for me to walk around the park saying the rosary. It's so public, with people walking by and hearing it. Maybe that affected them that way, them hearing the rosary and seeing a group of women praying the rosary on a Saturday morning."

Another memory that impacted Elizabeth involved rocks.

"Women carry things that are heavy with them," she said. With that in mind, during one workout, the women searched for rocks, which represented whatever they felt was weighing them down. They prayed and reflected on these burdens, and then at the end of the workout, they dropped the rocks at the foot of a crucifix that had been placed at the top of the hill behind the church.

Elizabeth said, "Letting the rock go at the foot of the cross and letting the Lord deal with it made you feel lighter."



Mary's Squad has also incorporated a Catholic-inspired workout — Soul Core, which involves strengthening, stretching and functional movement with the prayers of the rosary.

In addition to the spiritual and physical aspects, another important part of the workouts is respect.

"There's no body shaming," Elizabeth said. "That's important because you don't see a lot of that in regular gyms or exercise groups. The point is not to body shame each other or make ourselves look a certain way, just being accepting of each other as we are. The focus is more on growing in our faith and exercising is an added bonus. As women, we want to focus on our femininity and our modesty and being a good mother. That's one of the reasons why we chose Mary's Squad. She is the ultimate mother, and we try to be like her so that we can get closer to our Lord." †

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2019: GOODBYE MELANCHOLY, *Hello Lovely!*

I HAVE TO ADMIT I've never been a person who was captivated by systems of government or put much faith in politics. While I believe it is a legit calling for many a brave soul, it has never interested me. Long ago, during the early years of marriage, I found myself in exasperation over my husband's obsession with politics. Though I had never seen this side of him previously, for whatever reason, his life became centered around the daily success of the party to which he was affiliated and the demise of the one with which he wasn't.

It seemed as if his mood rose and fell with the news story of the day. I remember challenging him frequently as to whether or not this obsession was helping him live his vocation as a husband, a father, a social worker. Was it helping him to be a vessel of God's grace to the world? I reminded him that Judas Iscariot also thought that salvation would come through politics — if only Jesus could rise in political rankings, Israel would be saved. Look at how things worked out for him, I would say.

Some of the gifts of life's journey are the time and experiences it gives us to grow and change. I am happy to report that, after some time, my husband got off the obsessive political train and found a better balance. His focus shifted more to how he could make

**STORY BY
LISA LOHENRY
GILLIGAN,**
*whose parish
when she was
growing up was
St. Mark's in
Wheaton*

a difference in the lives of those God had entrusted to his care — us, his family and the combat veterans who suffer from PTSD, whom he treats in his work as a psychotherapist. Each day, when he goes to work, he lives his life performing what we Catholics refer to as the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, kind acts by which we live out the teachings of Christ by helping our neighbors with their material, physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

But in some kind of weird role reversal, here we are about 20 years later, and over the past two years I've found myself slowly but steadily becoming the obsessive one. On too regular of a basis, I've been drawn like a moth to a flame to the chaos and negativity and sadness and injustice and plain ol' ugliness playing out in American politics. Ugh. It's not fun, but some days I just can't even stop myself.

Back in my college days, as a double major in theology and mental health/human services, I was introduced to the ancient Theory of Temperament. Different fields of the sciences have since re-framed it in many ways, but simply put it proposes that there are four basic types of temperaments found in human beings. Most suggest we are primarily comprised of one type, but others present the idea we are more likely a mix of two or more. Our professor had us take some kind of assessment to determine what our temperament was: melancholic, phlegmatic, sanguine or choleric. (If interested, you can take a similar quiz here: <http://temperaments.fighunter.com/>.)

Truly, it was no surprise to me when after adding up the numbers, I was deemed as having a melancholic temperament.

I found myself as a melancholic, which was described as: "Their generally dour demeanor comes from their inner struggle between an imperfect world and a desire for perfection." BINGO!

This is the truth at the core of my everyday experience, for as long as I can remember. One of my earliest memories was watching *Jesus Christ Superstar* and bitterly weeping over the injustice of Jesus being killed. For days this sadness hung over me like a big, black cloud. Heck, I was only like five years old, people! These tendencies go WAY deep, and I have a long and too comfortable relationship with approaching everything I experience as not measuring up to how it should be. God have mercy on the people in my life (y'all know who you are). Thank you for not giving up on me — *at least not yet!!*

When I take a deep introspective look inside, I still don't think I am a political person, but I do believe I have a deep commitment to Gospel values. As a teen, one of the qualities about Jesus Christ that made me want to follow Him and know Him and live a life trying to emulate Him was that He was a rebel with a cause.

He bucked a system in which the poor and the misunderstood and the disabled and the women and the down-on-their-luck folks were written off. He championed the cause of the marginalized, and He dined with sinners. And even more captivating to me was that some of His loudest critics and fiercest opponents were those from His own religious background, even from His own family. WHOA. This was unprecedented rebellion in the name of LOVE.

So fast forward to now, and from my melancholic viewpoint I see the way Jesus lived in the world and the way He loved people as the way the world should be. But as a wise teacher once wrote, *"There is nothing new under the sun."* These past two years have been filled with encounters in which various groups of friends and acquaintances, with whom I formerly shared a vast amount of common ground on this vision of the world, are lining up in accusation against each other, fighting voraciously with words and insults. I find myself in this weird place where some of the loudest critics and fiercest opponents to my vision of a perfect world are those with whom I share a religious background and a shared history of life. Herein lies the dilemma, the drama, the trigger which I allow to dive me into a sea of melancholy for days on end. And I've finally decided it needs to stop.

In an unexpected and wonderfully surprising turn of events, an extraordinary person entered my life last spring through a common loved one. After a few blessed opportunities to encounter her over a period of nine months or so, I have decided that she is the embodiment of the word lovely. If we still relied upon printed dictionaries to learn the meaning of words, it would be entirely appropriate for her picture to appear next to the word lovely. And this isn't just because she is outwardly beautiful, which she is. But it goes so much deeper than that. There are a few different definitions of lovely found in the Free Dictionary, which aptly apply to my new friend. They are as follows:

1. *Loving and attentive*
2. *Inspiring love*
3. *Having a beauty that appeals to the heart or mind as well as to the eye*
4. *Highly pleasing; delightful*
5. *Of a great moral or spiritual beauty: a lovely character.*

Lovely is who she is, and what she is about. No one can fake this. In a world filled with reasons to be melancholic, her simple presence in a room lifts up and illuminates all that is beautiful. Even before she speaks a word, her heart is open and welcoming; her eyes communicate love and attentiveness and are always looking for beauty. She finds the good in people, in the

world of nature, in the world of great thinkers, writers and poets, and she searches and finds the good in ugly situations and difficult experiences.

Spending time in her company is delightful, pleasing and it makes me want to be a better version of myself. What I've come to learn from my friend's example is that becoming lovely takes a lot of work. It takes years of mindfully choosing to find the lovely over and over and over again in people, in places, in things, and in situations — and then to respond in kind with loveliness over and over again to people, to places, to things and to situations. For her, the journey to lovely started from the darkest and lowest place of her life, and recovery was the road she took to get there.

With the commencement of a new year, I have been inwardly searching for a single word to guide me forward in 2019. The reason I really like the idea of choosing a word, rather than a specific resolution for a new year, is because one word can inspire a multitude of positive actions as I unpack it and embrace it and live it in the months ahead. The word I have chosen is this: Lovely.

Cooperating with God to focus on all that is lovely will most definitely require hard work and choices and mindfulness. I will need to find balance and stop giving power to politics and pundits and the online arguments between my friends. When I am tempted to turn back, I will need to ask myself if such an obsession helps me live my vocation as a wife, a mother, a vessel of God's grace in the world. I will need to remind myself that the salvation of the world will most definitely not come through politics, but through Love incarnate.

Like my new friend, I can use the tools of recovery to strengthen me on the way to becoming lovely. Arguably the best prayer ever written in the 20th century is *The Serenity Prayer* by Reinhold Niebuhr. It is the antithesis to my melancholic way of seeing. May it become my new daily anthem ...

*God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
As it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make things right
If I surrender to His Will;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with Him
Forever and ever in the next. Amen. †*

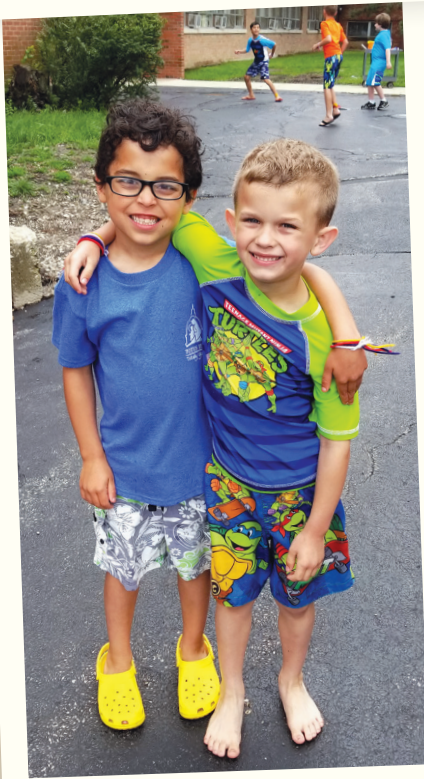
IT TAKES YEARS
OF MINDFULLY
CHOOSING
TO FIND THE
LOVELY OVER
AND OVER AND
OVER AGAIN
IN PEOPLE, IN
PLACES, IN
THINGS, AND
IN SITUATIONS
— AND THEN
TO RESPOND
IN KIND WITH
LOVELINESS
OVER AND
OVER AGAIN
TO PEOPLE,
TO PLACES,
TO THINGS AND
TO SITUATIONS.



YOUR STORY
YOUNG ADULT
MINISTRY

TOTUS TUUS OFFERS SUMMER FUN FOR CHILDREN

A very important question that many Catholics tend to ask themselves is: What does it mean to live as a Catholic? A riveting analogy for the Catholic faith is that our lives equate to a journey of learning more and more about God and our identity as His beloved sons or daughters. The best way to begin this journey is to simply pursue our own curiosity of God.



We can do this by sharing our journey with others and also taking the initiative to participate in as many opportunities presented to us. One such opportunity is a summer youth program called *Totus Tuus* — a Latin phrase meaning “totally yours” — which allows children to learn more about the Catholic faith by developing a solid basis to embark on their lifelong adventure through the mysteries God.

God has called upon enthusiastic young adults (the *Totus Tuus* teachers), who are sent out by the church to evangelize and educate the children in the love of Christ with one another. In order to invoke their curiosity, the children are encouraged to ask questions about what, why, and how the journey of our faith can greatly influence their lives. Thus, *Totus Tuus* is split into two different programs: the day program (grades 1-6) and the night program (grades 7-12), so as to help guide their curiosities in an age-appropriate, constructive way. The day program includes silly songs and dances, interactive skits and activities, and, most importantly, a direct connection with God through daily Mass. The children learn about the basics of our Catholic faith, along with a mystery of the rosary with the use of exciting hands-on learning and meaningful interaction among peers and their teachers.

As for the night program, teens in grades seventh through twelfth are welcomed to dive just a bit deeper into the Catholic faith. The teens are met wherever they are in their personal faith journeys and are invited to take one step further along that journey by encountering Jesus and also each other.

Totus Tuus provides for them many different ways to continue building upon the strength of their faith by emphasizing their worth as children of God and also the worth of others, each night. Thus, the teens begin to realize they are not alone in their daily struggles and that Jesus carries their baggage for them to the cross. The *Totus Tuus* teachers encourage and motivate the teens to make the transition of simply *being* a member of the Catholic Church to *living* as a follower of Jesus Christ. They then are able to embrace and live the Catholic teaching of love in a society that spews so much hatred, because, together, they embody the next

generation of our Church.

Before the young adult teachers are sent out to educate the youth about the Catholic faith, they attend a two-week training to engage in their own personal faith journeys with their deep desire to follow God’s will for them. Like the children the *Totus Tuus* teachers encounter, they too are reminded of their identity as children of God and the importance of their relationships with Him. Before their commissioning, the soon-to-be *Totus Tuus* teachers learn how to embody their task as a teacher and role model of Jesus Christ from their *Totus Tuus* coordinator of that particular diocese, along with the help of local priests, religious life, and other diocesan members.

They acquire complex knowledge of the faith and partake in different types of prayer, such as the Divine Mercy Chaplet, the rosary, Liturgy of the Hours, songs, etc. They also gain valuable life skills that can even pertain to future careers, such as patience and working in a group/team. In doing so, *Totus Tuus* teachers will find certain talents and skills that they pos-

sess, as well as networking with amazing families, priests, and religious life around their local diocese, all while growing deeper in their relationship with God and discovering the necessity to catechize the youth and love their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

This enlivening program also promotes community building within parishes and throughout the diocese. With the help of parish coordinators and diocesan priests, the *Totus Tuus* teachers receive the support and resources they need to help make this program unforgettable for the children. Families within parishes also have the opportunity to host the *Totus Tuus* teachers either overnight or for dinner, so as to have wonderful discussions and an exchange of stories and insights. Community is unbelievably important to this program, so that the children can engage with the many role models

within their parish, as well as the young adults who come to teach them. Seeing living examples of Jesus will inspire them to do the same in their own lives as they succeed, and sometimes struggle along, through their own personal journeys. With the collaboration and support of the parish and its members, along with the *Totus Tuus* team members, the children will be surrounded by open encouragement from the Catholic Church in order to fully understand the true strength and power of God’s love.

Overall, *Totus Tuus* is a program filled with immense love and joy for everyone involved. The most important takeaway from this fantastic program is a deep appreciation and understanding of God’s love for each and every one of His children, which is emphasized by the acquired motivation to be active in the faith and church community. †



**STORY BY
GRACE
CRUMBAUGH,**
*who was one of
the young adult
leaders in the
diocesan Totus
Tuus program
last summer*



TO REGISTER
your children, grandchildren, nieces, and/
or nephews for this summer’s *Totus Tuus*
program, or to find out more information,
go to www.givecentral.org/TTjoliet.

CREDITS

Christ is our Hope

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LOCAL NEWS



↑ Packed Crowd at Elmhurst College Hears Lecture by Bishop Conlon — Bishop R. Daniel Conlon delivered the Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Lecture last month at Elmhurst College before a packed crowd. During the Q and A part of the evening, he answered questions about why many young adults are disengaged from the Church. After the lecture, one attendee, Matt Margaron, said: "There is a rising movement of young people who are seeking earnestly for Jesus. They want to belong, and they want to participate in something that matters. It was so evident ... when I walked onto a college campus and the Student Center is full for a lecture on Jesus. The same young people are looking for direction, and the Church needs to respond. Wednesday's [Feb. 6] conversation led by Bishop Conlon was so inspiring and beautiful. He did not shy away from the realities and obstacles before us, but he called us to look at Jesus and follow."



↑ Latina lay leaders will study the recent pastoral letter of Bishop R. Daniel Conlon during their pastoral formation of ESCAP (Escuela de Capacitacion Pastoral), the Spanish leadership formation program of the Diocese of Joliet, sponsored by the Office of Hispanic Ministry. In the photo, the lay leaders are holding up the November 2018 issue of the magazine, which published Bishop Conlon's pastoral letter. Bishop Conlon is advocating that the diocese become full of missionary disciples. For more details, call or email William Becerra at 815-221-6247 or at wbecerra@dioceseofjoliet.org.

FREE AT LAST

A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE APPROACH TO OUR CURRENT PAROLE SYSTEM

DATE: 04.10.19

TIME: 7:00 PM

**LOCATION: BLANCHETTE
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CREST HILL, IL 60403**

Join us for a powerful experience! We are honored to have Fred Weatherspoon and Wendell Robinson, two men who spent 20+ years in prison share their story with us. Learn from Julie Anderson, mother of an incarcerated son and an advocate for restorative justice. And Christie Billups, theology professor at Lewis University who will share how various justice issues related to prison reform are rooted in Catholic social teaching.

ART GALLERY. PANEL PRESENTATION. REAL CONVERSATION.

Panelists:



Christie Billups, D.Min
PROFESSOR



Fred Weatherspoon
MENTOR



Julie Anderson
ADVOCATE



Wendell Robinson
LABORER

CONTACT

RSVP BY 04.09.2019

Edith Avila Olea,
Justice & Peace Associate Director
eavilaolea@dioceseofjoliet.org



↑ Recent Achievements by St. Raphael School Students — Elizabeth Harrington, 8th-grade student at St. Raphael School, in Naperville, pictured with Father Dan Bachner, St. Raphael's pastor, was the recent winner of the Knights of Columbus' Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest. Students had to write on "How does your family keep its Catholic Faith in Action? In other news at the school, Aidan Van Someren, 5th-grade student, hosted his first service project last December, along with his sisters. He invited his class, and 14 out of 20 classmates came. They made get well cards and ornaments. They brought stuffed animals, puzzles and books and made activity bags for children with chronic illnesses at Edwards Hospital and for The Ronald McDonald Family Room. There were 316 kids at the project, and his classmates were already asking when the next project would be. "I was so touched by the genuine joy they had in helping others, Aidan said. "I was really proud of them."

BRAVERY and the PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT

On Jan. 17, I was about 734 miles away from home, kneeling in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament at George Mason University's EagleBank Arena. I am a student at Benet Academy in Lisle, which had packed three buses full of students to attend the March for Life in Washington, D.C. The rally that was occurring while I was kneeling in adoration was called "Life is VERY Good," hosted by the Catholic Diocese of Arlington.

I was praying for my friend, my friend who was kneeling next to me. Before the event was over, she and I headed over to the sacrament of reconciliation. When we arrived at the curtained-off area where priests were giving confession, we were greeted by some enthusiastic and smiling Sisters of Life, a contemplative and active religious community, dedicated to the promotion of pro-life causes. They were radiating joy and love.

I finished my confession first and then went outside the curtain to wait for my friend to finish. While I was waiting, a novice from the Sisters of Life approached me, and we began to talk. We spoke about the 15 hours it took for me to get there; my school's "Lifeguard" theme; how classmates and I had visited Arlington Cemetery earlier that day, and other small talk. But somehow those little things we laughed about felt deeper than that. Her smile was contagious,

and it was a small but meaningful experience. This was the first of the many small encounters that made up my March for Life experience. And as wonderful as that short conversation was, what happened next, when we said goodbye, touched me in a different way.

Before she left, I asked for her name. She told me Lauren. I told her my name was Valeria. With genuine excitement and cheer, she asked if it had a meaning. I said it means "brave" ("valor"). She replied "Wow, that's so beautiful! This world needs more bravery. This *movement* needs bravery. It needs more of you, Valeria!" I don't know if Lauren will ever know how much that meant to me.

I've been heavily involved in the pro-life movement since middle school, but, lately, there have been moments, where in the past I would have spoken up, that I stay silent or immobile. I let opportunities to stand up for life pass by more and more. I thought it was enthusiasm that I lacked, and I was wrong. Yet this beautiful novice from the Sisters of Life, who had known me five minutes, figured it out without knowing it. I was losing courage. That is a scary thing.

At that moment, my friend finishes her confession and makes a beeline for me. She tells me she's made a decision on something very personal I've been praying for her to make for months. A decision that demonstrates such great courage I cannot express it in words. These two things formed the glasses through which I viewed the world for the next two days.

But it was while I was at the march that I saw many fruits of courage from the people around me. At the march, I had a red bandana wrapped around my leg from a table representing Abby Johnson's organization, "And Then There Were None." Abby's organization helps abortion industry workers leave their jobs — just like



she did. In my hand was a sign from the Student's for Life booth, an organization that has helped more than 1,031 students start their own pro-life student groups across the country in campuses that don't want them.

My friends were holding signs from groups such as Human Coalition, an outreach network that has saved 11,220 babies from abortion by providing their mothers the support they need. And, finally, the simple act of marching, along with the hundreds of thousands of other people standing shoulder-to-shoulder on the streets of Washington, D.C., is the result of the work of the late Nellie Gray, who founded the March for Life. More than 200,000 people marching against what truly is the greatest injustice of our time is not something to be overlooked. We should be joyful, but not too comfortable; there still is so much work to be done.

But it can be accomplished as long as we take just a little of the courage and bravery displayed by the people at the March for Life every year. †



Valeria
Guerrero



**CHECK OUT
BISHOP CONLON'S
COLUMN ON
ABORTION
ON PAGES 2-3
IN THIS
MONTH'S ISSUE.**

**STORY BY
VALERIA
GUERRERO**

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