

PROCLAIM

Christ in your Life

INSIDE:

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the struggle

RECOVERY TO REDEMPTION

ONE MAN'S JOURNEY TO JESUS CHRIST



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THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

One of my favorite sportswriters is Terry Pluto. Besides writing about major league sports, Terry writes a column about faith. His December 2018 “Faith & You” column was titled: “When I really didn’t feel like talking, I listened.” It was one of those experiences of sitting on a long flight, next to a total stranger.

Terry was literally praying that the woman next to him would not want to talk. He was tired and just wanted to get home. For the first hour of the flight, they did not speak, but he could tell she had serious health problems. She had trouble getting out of her seat to retrieve some medication.

He finally said, “It looks like you’re having a tough day.” She responded, and Terry listened. She explained that she had been diagnosed with Lyme disease. It changed her whole life. At age 40, she was on disability.

Something made Terry want to pray for her. As passengers were exiting, Terry asked and she accepted his offer.

She took his hand and squeezed. The prayer lasted only a few moments, but it included prayer for the people helping her and treating her. When he finished, she said, “Thank you. I needed something like this.” Terry

replied, “We all do.”

Christians have been entrusted with a powerful message: the Good News that we have been set free from the power of sin and death through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We all need to hear that story; it’s the greatest story ever! Of course, we can read it in the Bible, but doesn’t it come alive when we hear it through the personal story of someone like us?

That’s what our new magazine, PROCLAIM *Christ in your Life* is all about: stories of individuals and families throughout our diocese. They are stories of faith — finding it, sharing it, living it.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a timeless story that truly comes alive in the stories of so many people. Future issues of PROCLAIM magazine will feature stories about and from real persons of our diocese; stories to inspire, educate, inform

and celebrate our Catholic faith. I know you will enjoy it. Pass on your copy to someone else. Terry Pluto is a journalist who knows what it means when someone shares their story. So do real persons from our diocese whose stories are shared in this issue. It’s really Good News! Please share it with others. †



**BISHOP
MARK BARTCHAK**
*is the eighth bishop
of the Catholic
Diocese of Altoona
Johnstown.*



WHY WAS PROCLAIM MAGAZINE CREATED?

Many Catholics attend Mass weekly and are active participants in the life of the Church. However, many busy families and individuals find themselves participating less and less. Others may have had a negative experience, become lukewarm or fallen away altogether. PROCLAIM magazine was created to reach out to all Catholics in the diocese with stories that inspire, educate, inform, and celebrate the Catholic faith.

WHY AM I RECEIVING PROCLAIM MAGAZINE?

You are receiving this quarterly magazine because you belong to a parish in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. Bishop Mark and your parish are committed to reaching out to every Catholic home with PROCLAIM magazine because they want to remind you that you belong to something — your local parish — and you belong to someone: Jesus Christ.

HOW IS PROCLAIM MAGAZINE PAID FOR?

Your parish, as well as all other parishes of our diocese, make it possible for PROCLAIM magazine to get to every parishioner’s household. PROCLAIM magazine is also blessed to have the support of several advertisers. Please support them with your patronage.

OTHER WAYS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR FAITH :

Check out the back panel of this inaugural issue for ways to stay connected. The diocese has multiple communications available to people of all ages and in all stages of their lives. Seek and you will find that becoming connected and staying connected to Jesus Christ and your diocese is easy and available 24/7.

IS PROCLAIM MAGAZINE AVAILABLE IN DIGITAL FORMAT?

Yes! Please visit www.dioceseaj.org and click on the media tab.

WHY AM I CATHOLIC ?

BY ANDY ZENGEL *a graduate of Bishop Guilfoyle High School, Altoona*

Recently, Catholic Extension, a fundraising organization that supports poor mission dioceses, put a call out on social media asking readers to respond to the question **#WhyImCatholic**.

The response was overwhelming, but one particular response caught PROCLAIM magazine's eye — written by none other than Williamsburg native and 1999 Bishop Guilfoyle graduate Andy Zengel.

Andy is a 2003 graduate of Notre Dame's baccalaureate theology program. In 2005, he earned a master's in education from Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education Program.

Today, Andy is the principal of St. Joseph's Elementary School in Knoxville, Tenn., where he also teaches eighth-grade religion. He is married and the father of five.

When contacted, Andy was happy to share his story of faith — first as a Catholic in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown at St. Joseph, Williamsburg and now as a parishioner in the Diocese of Knoxville. †

"I became a Catholic because my parents had me baptized and raised me in a faithful home. I'm Catholic now for the only reason any adult should be — because it's true. It's true that the Son of God became man, founded the Church, died for our sins and rose from the dead. That was a painful and difficult time for the early Church. They shared their stories of faith, hope and love, and the seed of the Church sprouted, bloomed and flourished amidst persecution, heresy, corruption, war, ignorance, intolerance and demonic attack. Those forces are still present in our world — even inside our beautiful Church. When I am confronted by doubts, I remind myself that our faith is not just a long history or a list of beliefs or a set of rituals — it's about a person: Jesus Christ, "the Way, the Truth and the Life." I'm Catholic because it's true."

PROCLAIM is now asking you, our readers, to share your own **#WhyImCatholic** story. Write to whyimcatholic@dioceseaj.org and you may be featured in the next PROCLAIM magazine!



IS CHRIST REALLY AND TRULY PRESENT *in the Eucharist?*

Q: Dear Father Joe: I've read a lot of talk online that, according to a recent study, most Catholics don't understand Church teaching about the Eucharist or don't believe in it. People seem very sad and angry about this. As I read all the comments, I wondered if I believe the right thing. Please help, I want to be a good Catholic.

A: God bless you! Your email was like many I have received in the past few days. This concern is so common that we decided to jump a few topics and get after this as soon as we could. So, we'll start right off by looking at the poll, what it revealed, and then what, we, as Catholics, believe about the Eucharist.

First, what did the poll reveal?

Thirty-one percent of Catholics interviewed stated that they believe the Church's teaching about transubstantiation, while 69 percent stated that they "believe the bread and wine are only symbols."

Now, take that 69 percent who stated they believe the bread and wine are only symbols and you find that 43 percent of them believe that this is what the Church teaches.

What does this tell us? In my opinion, it reveals not so much a willful disagreement with the Church on a core doctrine as a misunderstanding of what the Church teaches.

So let's look at a quick summary of transubstantiation, the Church's explanation for the bread and wine actually becoming the reality of the body and blood of Christ. I'm going to try to explain simply some fairly complex theological and philosophical truths using an analogy, so stick with me on this.

We start with the idea of you, a human. Every human being — every person — has elements to him or her that are visible and some that are invisible. The visible part of you, and me, is an external reality we share with everyone we meet. Most humans follow the basic human form: We physically look like humans and share more visible traits than we don't.

The invisible parts are more of an "internal reality." We commonly describe this as our soul/spirit or nature/heart. (Just to name a few, and these are not theological terms!) This is a way of saying that we are completely unique in many ways. We all have strengths and weaknesses, we are varying levels of patient or happy or smart — all these sort of "internal" traits that make us unique are from the invisible part of us. They are what we might call our substance.

What is true of you is also true of other things: There is an element that is visible to the world and a core element of it that is not visible.

Now, let's go back to the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples. What we believe is that, at the sacred moment, Jesus took the bread and changed its substance. The outside of it (form) stayed the same, but the wheat and water that made it bread (substance) was changed into **Christ's very body**.

This is what transubstantiation is: "transforming the substance." Jesus did the same thing with the wine, too, as it became his blood. We believe that, at every Mass we pray, we join in Christ's eternal sacrifice. And as we re-present the sacrifice, the priest becomes *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ), and the substance of the bread and wine is transformed into the very flesh and blood of Christ. And not just his body and blood, but every aspect of who Christ is: His body, blood, soul and divinity are fully present in each element of the Eucharist.

Why did he do this? For a lot of reasons, but as he showed us in the Incarnation, it is all part of the way his love works — he enters every element of our experience and transforms it. Christ took something

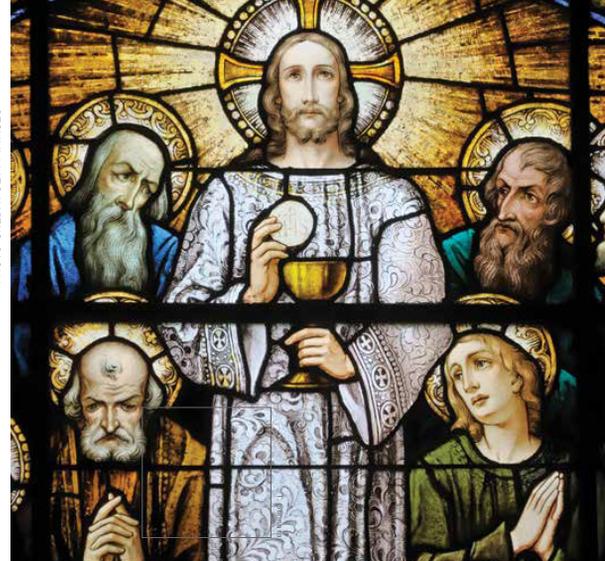


PHOTO CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

FATHER JOE KRUPP

is a former comedy writer who is now a Catholic priest.



our bodies need (food) and transformed it into something our souls need — him!

In this, Christ literally enters us in a way that feeds both parts of the human experience—the body and the soul.

This is a miracle of love, and I think that part of the reason some Catholics say they don't believe it is not because they were never taught it, but because it is so unbelievably miraculous and shocking that they just assume they were taught wrong.

I did a very small, unscientific poll with random parishioners throughout the week. I asked them about transubstantiation and it was definitely a word they struggled with. However, as the conversation continued, I asked them what happens to the bread and wine we offer at Mass and every person I asked but one said that it becomes the body and blood of Christ.

I share this to help us put things in context. I think at least some of the confusion is that our Church language is confusing in today's world. We use different words differently in the Roman Catholic Church and, frankly, it's often that misunderstanding that is reflected in such polls.

The key is this: The Eucharist should transform us, and it takes more than proper theology for that transformation to occur in us. Our pride, anger and, stubbornness can work against the miracle that Jesus gives us. We need to approach the Eucharist with great reverence, devotion and love and let that change how we see and treat everyone we encounter.

Enjoy another day in God's presence. †

It's true... *You are what you eat*



BY FATHER CARL VACEK, TOR *Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Altoona*

You've heard it said, and perhaps you have said it yourself: "I don't need to go to church to be in contact with God." How right you are! God is everywhere and in everything.

So many today would prefer to connect with God while lying in their beds or walking along the seashore. Many today would say: "I'm spiritual yet I'm not religious!" or "I can connect with God at any time and anywhere!" Nobody could argue with this thinking.

So why bother going to church? Why is it necessary to accept a little piece of bread and a sip of wine to connect with the divine?

We, as humans, cannot begin to express the depths of this personal encounter with Christ.

We are not isolated individuals. We are born into this world because other people helped us. We grow up and get accustomed to the world because others have helped us. Ultimately, when we come right down to it, we are not "self-made." Our self — that person lying in bed or walking along the seashore connecting with God — got there because others have aided us in doing so. In the end, no one is self-made. Thus it comes to religion.

The meaning of the word religion comes from two Latin roots: "re" and "legio." When combined, it means "to put back together." Anyone who has had a torn ligament knows how important that is. If you want to walk again, you need help to put your ligament back together. Thank God for physical therapists and surgeons! So what does this have to do with God and spirituality? Much!

Bottom line: We don't come to God as isolated individuals.

The fact that you can communicate with God at all depends upon the fact that others have aided you in doing so. We come as a community of persons. Just as many grains of wheat go into creating one loaf of bread, and many grapes go into making one cup of wine. The

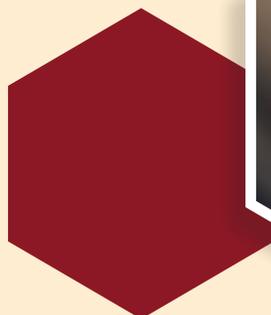
many make the one.

If you have lost touch with going to Mass on Sunday, don't get too set in your ways. Otherwise, you might miss out on a lot of the great stuff. That random grouping of people on any given Sunday will enable your singularity to connect with the greater wholeness that you seek for yourself. Perhaps it might be helpful to think of them as your "spiritual/physical therapists."

Yes, we together help each individual to "keep it together."

We all know by now how important it is for our bodies to feed on good, nutritious food. The same goes for our spiritual lives. Sure, the little piece of bread and the small sip of wine doesn't seem like much, but our faith tells us that they are the body and blood of Christ, the one who came to set us free from isolation and desolation. God never wants us to be, or even to feel, alone and without hope. We come to the eucharistic table because we have this hunger to commune with God, so we eat the Bread of Life to keep us whole and together. And just like the ordinary food that we eat daily, which makes us what we are, so, too, does the spiritual food of the Eucharist. We truly become what we eat. It was St. Augustine who, in speaking of the Eucharist, said: "*Behold the body of Christ. Become what you receive. Receive what you are.*" †

BOTTOM LINE:
WE DON'T
COME TO GOD
AS ISOLATED
INDIVIDUALS.



RECOVERY TO REDEMPTION

ONE MAN'S JOURNEY TO JESUS CHRIST



STORY BY PAM SEASOLTZ | PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAY KAUFFMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

John Kuzmiak's life's story reads like a modern version of the apostle Paul's: a conversion from living a life filled with misery and countless failures to a life filled with love, hope and passion for the Gospel.

The Bishop McCort graduate and parishioner of Our Mother of Sorrows (OMOS) Parish, Johnstown is a proud man of faith *today* — but it is his *past* that got him here. John is a recovering alcoholic and drug addict.

"I started drinking when I was 8 years old when I ran with an older crowd," he recalled, sitting at the Holy Grounds Coffee Shop on the OMOS campus. "I had good parents, a good upbringing. Even though I went to Catholic school, I think I was missing something even back then. As I got older, I needed something more, and I just felt that with alcohol. The feeling that I got took me somewhere else."

With a teddy bear demeanor disguised in a linebacker's body, he recalled the dream of playing college ball someday. But the constant alcohol parlayed into drug use during his early college years and ultimately ended that dream. "In addition, there's no room for anything else except for pursuing the means to get the substance that removes you from reality."

Despite his habit, he went on to earn two college degrees and met that special someone, his wife Nicole. "She was a good girl," he said tenderly with a smile. "A broken wing kind of girl. She always sees the best in everybody, and she certainly took a chance on me."

Eventually blessed with two children, his alcohol abuse continued, skyrocketing to the point of what he labeled "raging," added on top of his drug abuse. The marriage, the work, what little faith he said he had were slipping away fast.

"I tried several times to get clean," he admitted, "but I couldn't stop on my own, and I would pray so hard to God." It was a final ultimatum from Nicole that made him seek professional help. It clicked, and he went to rehab for what he proudly noted as "the first and only time." It

was also the time that God re-entered his life — where "someone more powerful than myself" guided him.

"It was my first spiritual awakening, and it changed my life," he said of the rehab experience. "I know God was working through this 23-year-old girl who was never trapped in addiction herself but became a counselor because her dad was an alcoholic. She made me realize the life that I was living in was all about me. I had a wife and two kids, and I was living for nothing but my selfish desires.

"There was all this shame," he continued. "I realized how horrible I was living this life. I believe this girl was sent to me at this moment."

After rehab, he continued recovery with Alcoholics Anonymous, which only fortified his resolve to remain sober.

"In Alcoholics Anonymous, we pray for God to free us from our self-bondage, worldly desires and temptations, and I finally realized God brought me to AA and AA brought me back to God."

Although he credited God for setting him on the road to recovery and redemption, John said he felt something down deep was still missing.

"It still didn't get me where I am at now," he said. "I knew I could talk to God whenever I wanted. The 'I wanted' again being still a little bit selfish."

"I would go to church every once in a while, and I would take the kids to church, but I would think, 'Why do I need to hang out with a bunch of people to pray to one God?'" This thinking continued for a long time.

John said he believed in God, thanked God for his help, but overall was still a "little bland" about his faith. "Life was good but not rewarding for me," he admitted. "I needed something more. I was looking for something more. Looking back, I was treading water."

It was another one-on-one encounter, this time with a parent of one of his son's classmates, which led to a second spiritual awakening that changed his life for good.

"I went on a field trip with my son, and another parent came up to me, a guy I didn't know very well. He noticed I had a tattoo on each arm. One arm had Gratitude and the other Humility. We started talking, and he told

“
I WAS LOOKING FOR
SOMETHING MORE.
LOOKING BACK, I WAS
TREADING WATER.
”

me about a program at his church called Alpha. I went home and talked about it with my wife; she agreed that it could be a positive experience. We decided that the Alpha course might be something we both needed.

"The love, singing, praise and worship sparked something in me," John shared. "I saw that these people cared. They wanted people to have a close relationship with Jesus Christ."

John said he even had a physical response. "I was prayed over; my arms and hands were trembling, cold and tingling all over. I couldn't move, and it felt like something filled me with unexplained joy. This was the moment my new life began. I had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Everything changed from there. I cried like a baby, and it was that amazing. I wanted it anytime, every time.

"I realized it took a community to bring me to God. I felt the love of God working through these people."

Since that time, he has participated in Alpha four times, each time experiencing a different role in the group, from observer to leader. "You have to have an open mind and let God come in."

"The first (spiritual awakening) was finding out what God didn't want me to do. My selfishness had damaged my relationships with family, friends, and God. The second one was finding out what God wanted me to do. I know it is to proclaim my faith and be a disciple of Christ."

That close connection he discovered with his parish community became even stronger when he became seriously ill. "Food, cards, prayers were constantly coming," he recalled. "I never experienced a whole community embracing my family and me. It once again showed me that we could serve God by serving one another."

Today at 44, John's been clean and sober for nine years. Now a father of four, he said his faith deepens each day. At OMOS, he and Nicole are involved in the diocese's *ARISE: Together in Christ* renewal program; he reads the Bible and has made a personal commitment to say devotions daily.

And like the apostle Paul, he's spreading the word of Jesus to others, especially to those who are struggling.

"I now work in recovery support services for a local nonprofit," he said proudly. "It is very gratifying to me

spiritually. I help others, but it also helps me by giving back my experience, strength, and hope. It has been a blessing.

"God, once again, has led me here," he said. "I don't go there as a job. I go there to help people."

With his marriage, his kids and now his faith set as cornerstones of his life, John said he is ready to tackle anything life has for him.

"The whole key to staying clean is you have to have God in your life. When you feel the absence of God, you need people to lean on, emotionally, and spiritually. We are meant to be here for each other.

"Gratitude and humility," he said with a smile as he reached out his arms. "You have to keep your eye on the prize; you're going to live in eternity with God." †



“ I REALIZED IT TOOK A COMMUNITY TO BRING ME TO GOD. ”



FOR INFORMATION ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION RECOVERY AND SUPPORT GO TO:

www.aa.org/Alcoholics Anonymous

www.na.org/Narcotics Anonymous

www.nar-anon.org/ For Families and Friends of Addicts



“
**JESUS WANTS THIS
RELATIONSHIP WITH
YOU EVEN MORE
THAN YOU MIGHT
WANT IT WITH HIM.**
”

AN UNEXPECTED EXPERIENCE

BY FATHER MARK BEGLY, *Our Mother of Sorrows Church, Johnstown*

My parishioner and friend, John Kuzmiak, certainly has a story to tell about finding a personal relationship with Jesus. How blessed he is to receive such a wonderful gift! But what about the rest of us?

A personal relationship with Jesus? Now, there's a question I have heard a lot lately. It comes from Catholics and non-Catholics, older folks and younger folks, priests, laity, churched, unchurched and everything in between. "What do you mean by a *personal relationship with Jesus?*"

It's like asking, "How do I know if I am in love?" or, "What do you mean by a soul-mate?" As you can see, it's not always

easy to come up with a one-size-fits-all type of answer — but it's still vital that we attempt to understand what we mean by a personal relationship with Jesus. So where do we start?

First, you must know that having a personal relationship with Jesus is at the very core of our Catholic faith. This idea is well-rooted in the teachings of the Church. We are taught to believe, to do, to entrust and to worship. We talk about the importance of the relationship, but it doesn't address the initial question: *What does it mean to have a personal relationship with Jesus?*

Well, let me tell you about someone I know who may sound exactly like you!

He grew up in a Catholic family. They all went to church, they all fulfilled their obligations and he even went to Catholic grade school. But during those years, God was a distant reality: very judgmental and harshly keeping score. No one ever spoke of — nor did anyone appear to know — anything about having a one-on-one relationship with a living and loving God.

Growing into adulthood proved to be difficult for him, and throughout his college years, he stopped going to church. Oh, he still "believed" in God, but God

**“JESUS WILL GIVE YOU HIS GREATEST GIFT —
THE HOLY SPIRIT. HE WILL NOT ABANDON YOU.”**

was far, far away and appeared to be only concerned about his moral behavior — at which he often failed. He felt an absolute emptiness; something was missing from his life. He had questions, but they had nothing to do with things “religious.”

As time went on, this emptiness eventually got so bad he fell into a deep depression and was filled with anxiety. These feelings terrified him and forced him to begin to seriously search for some purpose, some meaning to his life. He often wondered where and if it even existed. Not once did he consider the Church to be the place to search for answers: The Church was for people who had their lives together, not for people like him who felt so fragmented and chaotic.

He continued to struggle for some time when, out of nowhere, a person he had known only briefly invited him to join a small group to discuss God, faith and what it meant to be a follower of Jesus Christ. He hesitantly agreed to go, and much to his surprise he loved it! Each week dealt with one of the many dimensions of discipleship: commitment, risk, prayer, family, fear, failure, and especially for him, finding the direction and purpose of his life. And each gathering made him more and more excited about Jesus and what it meant to commit his life to him.

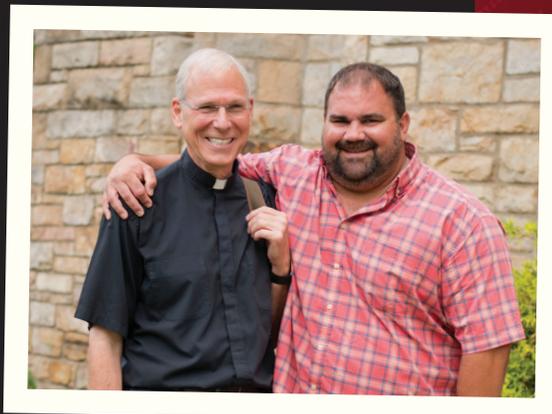
Well, at one of those meetings, he experienced something he had never experienced before. No one else in the room was aware of what was happening to him; but, all of a sudden, he became overwhelmed by the knowledge that Jesus was personally there. He was right there — for him! It was as real as anything he had ever experienced before. It’s almost as if he could reach out and touch Jesus; he was so present. He felt so accepted and loved that he almost burst into tears. Here was the answer to his every question, and much

to his surprise, it was Jesus. He was right there, and it was deeply, deeply personal. It truly was divine intervention!

That experience was many years ago, and that event was the most significant of this man’s life. This encounter was his first experience of what he had later learned was a personal relationship with Jesus, a relationship that continues to this day. It has never left him, even on days when he wonders, why me? He never felt like he was anyone special, and it’s a question he still asks. But even if he may never find that answer, one thing is for sure: Every chance he gets, he invites people to this very same personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It’s what led that man to the priesthood, and I am that man.

Know this: Jesus wants this relationship with you even more than you might want it with him. There’s no technique here, no program or timeframe to follow. Don’t be afraid to seek, ask questions, join a faith-sharing group or talk to a priest. Simply start the conversation!

Jesus will give you his greatest gift — the Holy Spirit. He will not abandon you. †



PROGRAMS LEADING YOU TO CHRIST

- 1. ARISE:** a current diocesan-wide, parish-centered process of spiritual renewal and evangelization through faith-sharing groups.
- 2. Alpha:** a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith through hospitality, sharing and open conversation with others.
- 3. Cursillo:** a short, informal spiritual retreat program that develops a deeper understanding of what it means to be fully Catholic.
- 4. Catholic Charismatic Renewal:** a spiritual movement that focuses on creating a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit by looking at the many “charisms” that Catholics receive through baptism and confirmation.
- 5. Any Small Catholic Faith-Sharing Group.**

Contact your parish directly for program availability.

Stronger THAN THE Struggle

MY FAITH HAS MADE ME STRONGER

BY BEVERLY MOLNAR

In a time and place when many young Catholics tend to distance themselves from their faith, Jessica Wertz finds her own growing stronger every day.

“I am often asked how a 22-year-old such as myself has such a strong faith,” said Wertz, a Bellwood native and recent Penn State graduate. “With everything going on in the world, most people my age lose hope and begin to doubt their religion.”

Wertz graduated from Penn State Altoona in May with a bachelor’s degree in business. She spent her final semester as an intern in the diocese’s Stewardship Office, where her responsibilities included writing materials to support the 2019 Catholic Ministries Drive, developing a grade school curriculum about Prince Demetrius Gallitzin and creating a marketing plan for Gallitzin’s Chapel House, Loretto. Working at the diocese was an experience she says helped her become more in touch with her beliefs and meet others who are very devoted to their own.

But like those of every age, Wertz has grappled with doubts. “Growing up, I would complain about going to Mass and CCD every weekend, just like every other kid,” she said. “I didn’t quite understand the importance until I started to become more involved in my church (St. Joseph in Bellwood). The greatest gift I ever received was to have Father Roesch and Father Alan (Thomas), as well as my parents, teach me about my faith and encourage me to follow the path God intended for me.”

Wertz has dealt with her share of personal struggles, which have tested the strength of her convictions.

“Even at my age, I have seen much suffering in my family,” she said. “Many people would turn

away from God because they don’t understand why he would allow them to go through so much heartache. But during my greatest losses, I realized the only thing that could sustain me was my Catholic faith.”

Praying and attending Mass brings Wertz comfort. And small miracles, such as seeing her dying grandfather at peace after receiving the anointing of the sick, only made her faith stronger.

“It was like the anointing released him and allowed him to pass away peacefully,” she said. “Witnessing that made me realize there is something special about the Catholic faith.”

Currently, Wertz is active at St. Joseph as an altar server, CCD teacher, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, and Parish Council member. She also serves as head floral decorator, a role that fits well with her ultimate goal of owning a florist shop. But she believes God’s true purpose for her is to encourage others who are struggling to turn toward their faith instead of away from it.

“When I face a struggle, my mother always tells me to ‘carry your cross and offer it up to the Lord,’” she said. “Sometimes it feels like the weight of your cross is too much. But if you rely on your faith and love of Jesus Christ, the pressure will ease and make your faith stronger, just as it has for me.” †

“I am Catholic because faith helps me through the most difficult times in my life. When I lose a loved one or go through a tough time, I realize that relying on my faith is the only thing that helps me through it. Praying and attending Mass bring me comfort in ways I can’t explain.” — JESSICA WERTZ

CAMPUS MINISTRY

Connecting Students to the Heart of God



The heart of Campus Ministry is connecting students to the heart of God. For many Catholic students, it can be difficult to keep the faith amid the challenges and distractions of college life; and easy to feel disconnected from God and the Church. That’s why campus ministry is so important. Across the diocese, Campus Ministry provides a “home away from home” for Catholic students, to help them stay close to God and to their fellow Catholics.

BY CHRISTOPHER KLOPP,
*campus minister and director
of the Lock Haven University
Newman Center*

At the Lock Haven Newman Center, we provide students an oasis of truth, goodness and beauty where they have the freedom to be Catholic. We offer a weekly dinner (often cooked by members of the parish), a Bible study where we talk about the Mass readings and other topics, contemplative monastic retreats, hikes, lectures, service projects — anything we can do to help students grow spiritually, intellectually and socially.

But the core of our ministry lies in the friendships we build, not only between students or with the campus minister but with God. The motto of the Newman Center (and John Henry Newman’s personal motto) is *Cor Ad Cor Loquitur*, “Heart Speaks to Heart.” The goal of all our activities and programs is to direct students to the heart of God. When we do that effectively, we see amazing transformations.

John started coming to our Bible studies because he wanted to learn more about the faith he had taken for granted his whole life. On his first night at the Newman Club, he told me, “I know Catholicism is the true religion. I just don’t know why.” By the time he graduated, he had started reading the Bi-

ble regularly, serving at Mass and going to Catholic conferences. Not only did he know why he was a Catholic, but he had become so completely on fire for the faith that his girlfriend dumped him because she didn’t share his love for Jesus Christ.

When Abby joined the Newman Club, she was a staunch pro-abortion advocate, but after attending a few of our theology discussions, she had come to understand the Catholic position and declared herself pro-life. She told me she loved coming to the Newman Center because it was the only place she could find true tolerance. “I can’t talk about these things with my liberal friends,” she said. Abby had found a kind of freedom and acceptance among Catholics that was unknown to her anywhere else.

Some students come to us with emotional and psychological problems and find us a supportive community that will pray with them and assist them in finding the help they need. Sometimes, God has even used the Newman Club to save students from suicide and abuse. Other times, students just need an understanding ear when things aren’t going well.

Others come with a strong faith and an

enthusiasm to serve the Church. One of these students, Ben, entered college intending to become a physician’s assistant, but dropped out two years later to attend seminary. His parents were thrilled that their son was going to be a priest, and they thanked the Newman Center for helping him discern his vocation.

All of these students found a connection to the heart of God at the Lock Haven Newman Center, but we are not unique. Throughout the diocese, the mission of Campus Ministry is the same: providing a place where students can have a heart to heart encounter with the God who loves them. †

Campus Ministry serves students at Penn State Altoona and University Park, Juniata College, Lock Haven University, Pitt at Johnstown, St. Francis University, and Mount Aloysius College.

Visit: www.dioceseaj.org/campus-ministry/

Now that you’ve read our first issue, what are your thoughts about **PROCLAIM magazine**? What would you like to see in future issues?

Everyone has a faith story and we would like to hear yours. Send all story ideas and photographs to magazineproclaim@dioceseaj.org





2019 CATHOLIC MINISTRIES DRIVE

BE A GOOD SHEPHERD.
GIVE HELP. BUILD HOPE. CHANGE LIVES.

Thank you for being a Missionary Disciple!

I hope you have enjoyed this first issue of our new magazine, **PROCLAIM** *Christ in your Life*. The stories of ordinary people have been shared as a reminder that the gift of our Catholic faith is what makes extraordinary things happen for our good and the good of others. These stories reflect the personal discovery of the amazing gifts that God gives to each of us.

They remind me of the Mission of the 72 disciples that Jesus sent out to various places (Lk 10:1-24). He told them to be themselves, their authentic selves, as people who have heard the Gospel and continue to encounter the Lord Jesus by living the faith and sharing it with others. The reaction of the 72 when they completed their mission was, "Wow!" And St. Luke says, "At that moment Jesus rejoiced," which means that he was more than grateful.

The Mission of the 72 continues, as seen in the stories in our new magazine. Each one of us is called to be a Missionary Disciple; to proclaim Christ in our life. I am grateful to all of you, and I give thanks to God for all of you who share your time, talent, and treasure for the good of others in our parishes, schools, communities, and countless activities all over the diocese.

Thank you for participating in the 2019 Catholic Ministries Drive — **Be a Good Shepherd** — which supports 14 ministries that nurture our youth, form clergy and laity, care for the poor, and strengthen families. If you have not yet participated in that part of the Mission, please make a pledge now. Thank you for doing your part as Missionary Disciples. The stories of ordinary people in our our diocese remind us that our Catholic faith makes a difference, and in return, we receive an abundant share in the joy and gratitude of the Lord Jesus.

+ Bishop Mark

You can still support the Catholic Ministries Drive through December 31, 2019!

- Make check payable to: **Catholic Ministries Drive**, Altoona-Johnstown Diocese, P.O. Box 409, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
- Online: go to www.dioceseaj.org click Giving
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