

JANUARY 2024

# HOLY NAME OF JESUS

*Parish Neighbors*

COVER PHOTO BY  
TRAVIS GEORGE



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**INSIDE  
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## HOLY NAME OF JESUS PARISH

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**Mass Times:** Monday - Saturday 8:00am, Saturday 4:00pm (vigil), Sunday 8:00am and 10:30am  
**Confession:** Tuesday - Saturday 7:00am - 7:45am, Saturday 8:30am - 10:00am and 3:00pm - 3:45pm  
**Adoration:** Saturday 8:30am - 10:00am, First Friday 8:30am - 12:00pm

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## WORKS OF MERCY

# FEED THE HUNGRY

By Michael Lee

The Works of Mercy “are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church #2447)

“Then the King will say to those at His right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food...Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee...?’” (Matthew 25:31-37, RSVCE)

Feeding the hungry may seem like an impossible task—after all, there are millions if not billions of hungry people. Where do I even begin?

We can follow the example of St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa), who simply helped one person, and then another, and another, etc. No one is called to feed all of the hungry people in the world. We’re called to feed the hungry person in front of us.

### WHAT ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN FEED THE HUNGRY?

- Donate food to your local parish or St. Vincent de Paul food pantry.



- Donate to the Catholic Charities office of your diocese.
- Buy a supply of food gift cards (grocery stores, restaurants, etc.) and give them out to people you meet who are in need.
- Help with a meal preparation and serving program in your parish or neighborhood—if there isn’t one, perhaps you and some co-parishioners could start one! Ask your pastor!  
“They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” (Matthew 14:16, RSVCE)

# HOLY NAME OF JESUS

*Parish Neighbors*

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## FROM THE PASTOR

“Planet Earth” is a documentary that was produced by the BBC in 2006. Someone bought me the box set for Christmas that year and I enjoyed it right from the start. I was still teaching high school seniors back then, and one Friday morning I decided to share some of the video with them. I expected derision and boredom, but that’s not at all what happened. The students were immediately captivated by the stunning beauty of the earth and found themselves sincerely looking forward to each Friday when we would watch another segment. Sometimes they’d yank my chain and start chanting, “Planet Earth, Planet Earth, Planet Earth!” And it was only Monday.

A wise person once claimed that there are five Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and nature. God created a beautiful planet for us to call home and we do well to both admire its beauty and respect its value by being good stewards. There are so many wonderful lessons we can learn by engaging the world around us. One such lesson came years ago when I was hiking during the winter. It was a mild beginning to winter that year and there was no snow until the day before Christmas (thanks to the millions of kids who were praying their little hearts out). As I was hiking, I saw an ermine (weasel) all dressed in his winter finery. The problem was he was wearing the wrong coat for the circumstances: white stands out when there is no snow on the ground! Sometimes what we wear is also a form of self-preservation.

When the new classical school opens in August, we hope to have a garden and some chickens. The goal is to cultivate in the children a deep reverence for God, Who created the world for us. And then He created us for Himself!



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Pastor



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# FORGET NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS— TRY A NEW YEAR'S VIRTUE

*By Laura Kerscher*

Every New Year brings great pressure and expectation to make (and keep!) New Year's resolutions. If you're one of those people who stresses about choosing a resolution or even someone who has given up on resolutions altogether—there is another way! This year try focusing on a virtue rather than a resolution. How is this different? Resolutions are goals to better yourself or the world around you while virtues are high moral behaviors or habits that help move you toward a goal. Unlike resolutions, virtues focus on the journey toward a goal instead of just the end goal itself. As a result, focusing on a virtue will create an environment for success and lasting change.

Think about a prior New Year's resolution you've made. Perhaps it was to lose 10 pounds, read the Bible, or to reconnect with friends/family members. Were you successful? Did you accomplish the goal? When making a New Year's resolution it can be tricky to choose one that will make an impact and be attainable. A New Year's Resolution of getting in shape, saving more money, organizing your basement/garage are all goals that will make a difference in your life but making such a resolution is doomed to fail unless you focus on the journey

to the goal and not so much on the end result. For example, instead of making a resolution to get in shape, perhaps you resolve to walk for 15 minutes, five days a week. Setting small measurable expectations will allow progress to be seen and success to be obtained even before the larger goal is completed. This way, instead of waiting to celebrate the end goal, you can celebrate the effort regardless of the results.

Are you ready to try a New Year's virtue but need more ideas? Check out the following examples:

- **KINDNESS.** Everyday perform at least one act of kindness. This could be a variety of actions but some ideas could be: smiling and waving at a stranger; paying for the coffee for the next person in line; tucking a special note in a child's/spouse's lunch.
- **TEMPERANCE.** Commit to practicing temperance in spending money (make a commitment to only buy items on your grocery list), in eating (commit to not taking seconds at dinner), watching TV or playing video games (commit to turning the screen off after a certain amount of time).
- **PATIENCE.** Commit to not losing your temper or yelling when someone upsets you. As a parent (or just as a human being) it can be a monumental accomplishment to refrain from yelling when a child or someone makes you angry. Make a commitment to not raise your voice in these situations (focus on one or two!)

Committing to a New Year's virtue—a specific behavior/action—will give you greater control over positive change. Experiencing small successes frequently will be a good motivator to continue growing and improving. You'll find that with each success, momentum builds and, before you know it, that behavior will become a new virtuous habit. So let's focus on the journey this year and end the vicious cycle of traditional resolutions. Happy New Year's virtue picking!





# We Need You

By Molly Judd

A few years ago, I went to Confession with this wonderful priest who has since gone home to God, Fr. Joseph Koterski SJ.

As I sat down in the chair across from him, I laid out all my sins *and* my frustrations about my current situation... begging for some insight!

After a brief pause and acknowledgement of my contrition he asked me.

“So, in situations like these, why don’t you just ask for help?”

It was silent.

“Well, because I think if I ask for help someone might think that I am needy, or they would become afraid of me, or worse feel used by me. Sometimes, it’s just easier to do it by myself.”

He listened and then responded, “Well, don’t you like it when someone asks you for help? How does that make you feel?”

I thought about it for a while because honestly, I just didn’t like where this conversation was going.

“Good. Trusted. Like I have a gift worth giving.”

“Exactly.” He said with his deeply kind and wise smile. “I think when you realize you don’t have to do everything alone,

and that you are *in fact* not alone, you will be much, much happier. The truth is, we will always *need* each other. God set it up that way.”

It’s funny; we want to be self-sufficient, self-reliable, not vulnerable, *ever!* But God reveals Himself to us in community. In the fact that we will always *need* each other.

But the truth is that we need each other to become like God. A God who is a community of persons—constantly giving and receiving love. Becoming holy is not the abolition of vulnerability, but the promise that vulnerability, communion, and unity come through the sharing of life, of gifts, of stories, of consolations, of sorrows.

As we embark on this journey toward the Eucharistic Congress, we invite you to be someone who can point out Jesus to others and to be a part of the community of believers who gather in prayer and worship together. We need you.

For more information visit [eucharisticcongress.org/register](http://eucharisticcongress.org/register).



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# SPIRITUALITY. FRIENDSHIP. SERVICE.

## WE ARE THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

By Ken & Marcia Tokarz | Photo by Emily Mueller

“Whatever you did for the least of my brothers you did for me.” Matt 25:40

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a Catholic lay organization made up of more than 800,000 people worldwide whose members are dedicated to serving Christ in those around them. Our organization leads men and women to join together to grow spiritually by serving the poor and suffering in their local community.

Here in Wausau, we are the St. Vincent de Paul Cabrini Conference, consisting of 30 members. While our purpose is to live out the Gospel message by serving the poor, what makes SVdP unique is the person-to-person contact we make with our neighbors in need. Through home visits we provide assistance for rent, utility bills, transportation, food, clothing, household goods, medical expenses and more. Most importantly, we provide emotional and spiritual support, along with hope, in difficult times.

The SVdP Thrift Store is a significant driver of the Society’s mission and a valuable resource for our community. Besides funding most of our \$170,000 annual emergency assistance outreach, it provides meaningful employment, volunteer opportunities, and a budget-friendly shopping option for everyone.

The newest addition to our organization is the Getting Ahead Program, an 18-20 week workshop, with 8-12 participants, who go through a life-changing learning experience to help them achieve more stability in their lives. Perhaps the quote, “Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and

you feed him for a lifetime,, describes the goal of the program. We just completed our 3rd workshop and continue to sponsor a “graduate” program to help and support participants’ as they carry out their new plan.

There are many ways that you can help or get involved; Conference member/home visitor, Getting Ahead Program mentor, store volunteer, and financial or thrift store donor. Your prayers are also invaluable. To find out more about helping us make a difference in people’s lives, or if you need assistance yourself, please contact us at help@svdpwausau.org or 715-298-3028 and follow the prompts.



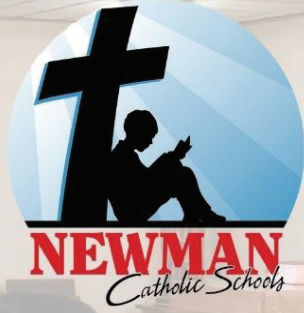
Jill Sexter is a Getting Ahead Graduate and now a co-facilitator for the Getting Ahead Program. She is a guide and source of support for those currently participating in the program.



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# THE LOHFF FAMILY

## TRUST IN GOD

By Shaun Eades | Photos by Dan and Allyson Lohff

**T**rust God, two small words that should be simple but often take a lot of time, faith, and effort to achieve. For Dan and Allyson Lohff, trusting God has helped them navigate school, begin careers, find each other, and settle into their new home, Wausau.

Both Allyson and Dan grew up as members of the Lutheran Church but during college, thanks to “amazing missionaries” who worked for FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) they learned more about the Catholic Church. Through FOCUS they met briefly in 2017 when Allyson was a student and Dan was a second-year missionary. Dan admits not remembering meeting Allyson at that time, but she does. Dan shares, “she says that I stood out to her... and I’m glad I made a positive impression on her.” When thinking back to her time with FOCUS, Allyson remembers “learning about the beautiful sacraments given to us in the Catholic Church and learning of the true presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.” She “quickly felt at home in the Catholic Church” and she and Dan are “grateful for the gifts we have been given, ultimately

being led to each other and into the sacrament of marriage.” Trust God...

Five years later, in January 2022, Dan found Allyson online via CatholicMatch. Dan praises God that “Allyson and I were open and willing to date each other and see what God wanted to do with us.” One year later, in January 2023, they were married at St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral in La Crosse. With their families on opposite sides of the state, they decided to visit centrally located Wausau and experienced a Sunday Mass, breakfast, and a hike in Rib Mountain State Park. They visited Wausau again soon after that and made an offer on a home. Allyson recalls, “it was made very clear to us that we were to begin our marriage and family life in Wausau.” Fast forward to January 2024 when Dan and Allyson will welcome their son, Ambrose to the world. “We know that it is unusual to name our child before he is born, but God helped us choose a great name and we didn’t see any reason to keep it secret from family and friends” says Allyson. Trust God...

Allyson currently works for Rennes Health and Rehab in Weston where she is an Occupational Therapist for older adults, specializing in treating hand and upper extremity injuries, lymphedema, and stroke rehabilitation. Dan’s career path had a few more twists and turns, however. After working for FOCUS for a few years he left to discern a possible vocation to the priesthood. Following his discernment year, Dan took a job teaching Theology at a Catholic school in Green Bay for three years. He then explored a few different career paths but ultimately went back to school and obtained a business degree in accounting. He currently works as a public accountant at KerberRose and plans to take the CPA exams in the next two years. Trust God...

Both Dan and Allyson enjoy the outdoors and are sports enthusiasts. You can find them cheering on the Badgers and Packers or family members that play college sports. Dan, himself, played football and baseball in college. “I will always be interested in sports because that was 100% of my life before I met Jesus in college,” he says. They both also enjoy reading and look forward to getting more involved with volunteer opportunities in the Parish. Joining Holy Name in September of 2023 Allyson says, “It took us living in Wausau a few months to start feeling at home and we are especially grateful to have found a parish home. We are inspired by all the people at Holy Name, especially the families.” Trust God...

It is written in Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways to submit to Him and He will make your paths straight.” Along with Luke 12:32 (Dan favorite verse), “Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father’s great pleasure to give you the kingdom.” These two Scriptures describe the journey Dan and Allyson have taken individually and together. Trusting God takes effort and Dan and Allyson believe that “effort is





success.” Allyson shares, “I want people to know how vital it is to keep God at the center of your life when you’re challenged to navigate big life decisions. I know we all try to trust God because He is God and He deserves our trust, but it is a major challenge to live out. Make room for God in your heart and He will make your path clear.”

When times are uncertain, decisions must be made, or reassurance is needed, follow the lead of Dan and Allyson Lohff and simply... trust God.

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**Do you know a fellow parish member who has a story to share?** Nominate someone you’d like to see featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at [stacie@holynamewausau.com](mailto:stacie@holynamewausau.com).



## EVENTS CALENDAR



**Saturday, Jan. 6** 1pm-3pm

ART PARK OPEN STUDIO

@ Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum.

Drop into the lower-level classroom studio for family-friendly hands-on projects guided by members of the Wisconsin Valley Art Association. Free

**Thursday, Jan. 11** 6:30pm-7:45pm

EVENING OF RECOLLECTION

@ Holy Name of Jesus Parish

The evening will include Adoration, a time for prayer and reflection, music, and an opportunity for confession.

**Sunday, Jan. 14** 3:30pm

SUNDAY MASS AND HEALING SERVICE

@ St. Matthew Parish in Wausau

The healing service will follow Mass. The sacrament of Reconciliation will be available from 2pm-3:15pm.

**Thursday, Jan. 18** 5:30pm

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CABRINI CONFERENCE

MEMBERS MEETING

@ the St. Vincent de Paul Store in Wausau.

**Saturday, Jan. 20**

WEEKEND WONDERS

@ Monk Botanical Gardens

These programs are designed for all ages of explorers to do together as a family. Every month features a different topic that will get you and your family outdoors, learning about the plants and animals in our big backyard. For more information and registration, go to [monkgardens.org/education](http://monkgardens.org/education).

**Saturday, Jan. 27**

WINTER FEST

@ 400 Block in downtown Wausau

Bring the entire family to the 400 Block in downtown Wausau for our annual Winter Fest! A day of free activities including art projects, ice sculptures, dog sled demonstrations, cookies, ice skating, and more. It’s a chance for your family to get outside and enjoy the winter weather.

**Thursday, Feb. 1** 6:30pm-7:45pm

EVENING OF RECOLLECTION

@ Holy Name of Jesus Parish

The evening will include Adoration, a time for prayer and reflection, music, and an opportunity for confession.

**Saturday, Feb. 10** 5pm-8pm

MARDI GRAS FUNDRAISER

@ Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Wausau

Mardi Gras Fundraiser benefiting Newman Catholic Classical School: Holy Name. Enjoy an assortment of New Orleans style fare, live and silent auctions and raffles.

The logo for Health for Life Medical Center. It features a stylized 'S' in a teal color on the left, followed by the text 'Health for Life' in a teal, serif font, and 'Medical Center' in a teal, sans-serif font below it. A red rose with green leaves is positioned to the right of the text.

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*All calendar event times are subject to change.*



# WHY *Catholic Schools* MATTER

By Bishop Barron

Originally published on wordonfire.com on January 31, 2023

**A**round the end of January and the beginning of February, the Church in the United States celebrates Catholic Schools Week. I would like to take this opportunity to sing the praises of Catholic schools and to invite everyone—Catholic and non-Catholic alike—to support them. I attended Church-affiliated educational institutions from first grade through graduate school, from Holy Name Elementary School in Birmingham, Michigan, to the Institut Catholique in Paris. That years-long immersion massively shaped my character, my sense of values, my entire way of looking at the world. I am convinced that, especially now, when a secularist, materialist philosophy largely holds sway in our culture, the Catholic ethos needs to be inculcated.

Certainly, distinctive marks of the Catholic schools I attended were the opportunity for Mass and other sacraments, religion classes, the presence of priests and nuns (a bit more common in the early years of my formation), and the prevalence of Catholic symbols and images of saints. But what was perhaps most important was the manner in which those schools showed the integration of faith and reason.

To be sure, there is no “Catholic” mathematics, but there is indeed a Catholic way to teach math. In his famous parable of the cave, Plato showed that the first step away from a purely materialist vision of the world is mathematics. When someone grasps the truth of even the simplest equation, or the nature of a number, or a complex arithmetical formula, he has, in a very real sense, left the realm of passing things and has entered a universe of spiritual reality. The theologian David Tracy has remarked that the commonest experience of the invisible today is through the understanding of the pure abstractions of mathematics and geometry. Properly taught, mathematics, therefore, opens the door to the higher

spiritual experiences offered by religion, to the invisible realm of God.

Similarly, there is no peculiarly “Catholic” physics or biology, but there is indeed a Catholic approach to those sciences. No scientist could ever get her work off the ground unless she believed in the radical intelligibility of the world—that is to say, the fact that every aspect of physical reality is marked by an understandable pattern. This is true of any astronomer, chemist, astrophysicist, psychologist, or geologist. But this leads rather naturally to the question: Where did these intelligible patterns come from? Why should the world be so marked by order, harmony, and rational patterning? There is a marvelous article composed by the twentieth-century physicist Eugene Wigner entitled “The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences.” Wigner’s argument was that it cannot be mere chance that the most complex mathematics successfully describes the physical world. The answer of the great Catholic tradition is that this intelligibility comes, in fact, from a great creative intelligence that stands behind the world. People who practice the sciences, therefore, should have no problem believing that “in the beginning was the Word.”

There is no “Catholic” history either, though there is most certainly a Catholic way of looking at history. Typically, historians do not simply recount the events of the past. Rather, they look for certain overarching themes and trajectories within history. Most of us probably don’t even realize this because we came of age within a liberal democratic culture, but we rather naturally see the Enlightenment as the turning point of history, the time of the great revolutions in science and politics that defined the modern world. No one could doubt that the Enlightenment was a pivotal moment, but Catholics certainly don’t see it as *the* climax of history. Instead, we hold that the pivot point was on a

squalid hill outside of Jerusalem around the year 30 AD, when a young rabbi was being tortured to death by the Romans. We interpret everything—politics, the arts, culture, etc.—from the standpoint of the sacrifice of the Son of God.

In his controversial Regensburg address from 2006, the late Pope Benedict argued that Christianity can enter into a vibrant conversation with the culture precisely because of the doctrine of the Incarnation. We Christians do not claim that Jesus was one interesting teacher among many, but rather the Logos, the mind or reason of God, made flesh. Accordingly, whatever is marked by logos or rationality is a natural cousin to Christianity. The sciences, philosophy, literature, history, psychology—all of it—find in the Christian faith, therefore, a natural dialogue (there is that word again!) partner. It is this basic idea, so dear to Papa Ratzinger, that informs Catholic schools at their best. And this is why the flourishing of those schools is important, not simply for the Church, but for our whole society.

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# STARTING FRESH - EVERY NIGHT!

By Michael Lee

EVERY DAY  
IS A  
FRESH START

Your alarm clock rings, your dog or cat lets you know it's time to go outside, you turn on your bedside lamp, maybe utter a quick "morning offering," and you're ready for a fresh start to a new day...or maybe not!

If you are first preparing to start fresh when you wake up, then you're not really preparing; you're just jumping into your day hoping for it all to come together. And it might...or might not; either way, it will be more or less "by chance."

Many of our great saints have written about and promoted daily reflection, examination, and resolutions as part of the "Regular Life" – the ordered or ruled life, even of ordinary, rank and file Catholics.

The main idea behind this, is that you intentionally set aside some time – I suggest 15 to 30 minutes – before going to bed for the night, to properly prepare yourself to start fresh in the morning.

During this time, it's good to have your journal (if you don't keep a journal, this might be a great way to start doing so) or a notebook, a pen, and some religious image – a crucifix, statue, picture of your patron saint, etc. – close at hand. You will want a peaceful and quiet atmosphere, without distractions (not even music). Then you go through the following steps:

1. Reflection – I like to do this by beginning with an off-the-cuff "litany of thanks," in which I simply rattle off all of the many things, big – small – and in-between, for which I am thankful. Once you start, you might be surprised how many you can name. Don't skip anything, even if it seems, perhaps, insignificant or even "silly." We are called to be thankful – it's part of being Eucharistic People. Go ahead and write these down as you think of them.
2. Examination, or as the great saints have called it,

"Particular Examen" – This is an honest inventory of the day now coming to an end. How have I (you) been faithful, how have I been lax, in what areas have I sinned and/or fallen short of what I believe God is expecting of me in my daily life? It's helpful to actually write these down.

3. Resolutions, or as my old spiritual director, Fr. Dacian Bluma, OFM (may he rest in peace), would say, "Banking Your Fire." You bank a fire to help it burn in the best and most efficient manner – and to protect it from being extinguished by the wind. Similarly, having concluded your Reflection and Examination, you now make resolutions (decisions) for how you can best live your life in the coming day. What will you need to do? How will you do it? When will you pray? How will you deal with conflicts? And most importantly, how will you start fresh when you wake up tomorrow morning?

The great philosopher, Socrates, is reported to have said at his trial (he was charged with corruption of the youth – and subsequently executed), that "The unexamined life is not worth living." As a solidly pro-life Catholic Christian, I would not go quite that far, but there is an important element of truth to what Socrates proposed. In order to progress properly in a good and moral life, one must have an honest picture of who one is. If I never reflect on and examine my life, I don't really have that honest picture – and without it, my tendency will be to live my life haphazardly, day after day, until finally it is spent.

So, as we start fresh in 2024, I invite you to begin a practice of "Starting Fresh – Every Night!"

Happy New Year!

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# REACH MORE: DEEPENING RELATIONSHIPS & SPREADING GOD’S LOVE

*By The Evangelical Catholic*



I couldn’t make it easy. I had to include my daughter, I had to make it hard for God to fulfill His part, mainly because I didn’t believe it would happen. Then, I would have no obligation to believe in Him if He was impotent in relieving my kids’ pain.

If He could do what I asked, I would be open to negotiations to come back into the Fold.

Today, years later, Tara’s daughter is a happy, thriving, highly regarded business owner. As for Nicholas, he has been medication-free for five years, works in a job that he enjoys, earns good pay and benefits, owns his own home, and has skills and support for navigating the mental health challenges that remain. All of this, according to Tara, can only be described as “truly miraculous.”

Three years into this journey of healing, after both of her children were solidly on their feet, Tara’s deal with God was far from her mind. Until she got a text from an old friend she lost touch with years prior.

**T**ara was furious with God. And desperate. How could a good God allow so much suffering in her son?

Starting at a young age, Nicholas has suffered terribly from a variety of mental health challenges. As his diagnoses and prescriptions multiplied, his symptoms only worsened. Small gains from one medication were soon overshadowed by larger setbacks from side effects. Therapy wasn’t working. Nothing seemed to help. After two interventions to save him from suicidal ideations, all while battling her own depression and despair, Tara made a deal with God.

I was so hurt, so very angry. So I did what any petulant child would do, I offered up a deal. Make my kids whole, make them successful, happy, and independent.

“Good morning Tara!

Hope you’re doing well...

I would love to connect with you again; I have been praying about inviting a few people to meet during Advent to share our lives and reflect on Scripture readings. I thought it would be great to get some old... friends together. I don’t know? Just following my heart... If we just meet for coffee, I would feel blessed.”

The two met up for coffee soon after. That same day, Tara wrote a blog post about her deal with God, and about her old

# ROASTAR

## THE WHOLE PACKAGE



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friend's text invitation, which she quoted verbatim. Her post ended with this:

We met today.

I told her about my bargain and that her message came at a perfect time. It felt like it was time to see this promise through.

This [blog] post, telling the world (or at least my little corner of it) about our pact, was my promise to give voice to God's role in putting my children's lives in order.

Negotiations have begun in earnest.

God was stirring.

Who was this friend who reached out to Tara, and what prompted her to do so?

Her name is Pia, and she had just finished a *Reach More* Training Group from the Evangelical Catholic. In this 12-week experience, Pia and a small group of fellow parishioners learned about Jesus's Great Commission and their unique role to play in it. Toward the end of the training, each participant prayed about where they believed the Lord was calling them to step out in faith to deepen relationships and to spread God's love in some concrete way.

"I was hoping to get an Advent Bible Study together," says Pia. "I had been praying for quite a long time about just how

God wanted me to do this, and I felt like he put on my heart to reach out to some of the friends I had done martial arts with years ago." She hadn't spoken with these women in years and didn't know anything of Tara's struggling children.

Yet, despite her nerves and fear of rejection, she responded generously to what God had placed on her heart. She issued several invitations like the one above.

Every woman said no.

Except Tara.

What Pia intended as an Advent small group turned into two years of meeting weekly just with Tara. Tara quickly opened up to Pia about her sufferings, faith struggles, and her desire to consider her end of the bargain. They rekindled their friendship and went deep, still meeting to this day. Sometimes they read and pray with Scripture, sometimes they go to Adoration or Mass together, sometimes they go for walks to exercise and discuss the ups and downs of faith and life. At times they both have been in tears witnessing breakthroughs of understanding, healing, and discovery.

When was the last time you paused to listen—to *really listen*—to what God is putting on your heart to do? There may just be another Tara out there waiting for your text—without knowing it.

**The Evangelical Catholic is a non-profit apostolate based in Madison, WI** that exists to inspire, equip, and support the laity in living out the Great Commission of Jesus.

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## WORDS OF WISDOM



*"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching."*

**From St. Paul's final words to St. Timothy (2 Timothy 4:1-2, RSVCE)**



# MISSION TRIP REFLECTION

*Article and photo by Natalie Townsend*

I went on the mission trip to Casa Hogar in Peru to serve those in need, but ended up coming home realizing they had an even bigger impact on me. It was a beautiful experience in which I gained a new perspective on life and a deeper understanding of God's plan. At Casa Hogar, I built friendships and performed acts of charity, while simultaneously being inspired and changed for the better.

Arriving in Peru, I was completely unprepared for what I was going to witness, an orphanage full of God's love. Our group was given a tour of the vicinity and I was amazed by just how well Casa Hogar was run. We learned that each child is placed into a family with Maestros who step into the parental figures. Additionally, the children have set schedules and rules they follow to keep things orderly and prevent trouble. We were told about a few of the heartbreaking backgrounds some of the children come from but learned rather quickly that they do not let this affect them. All of the children at Casa Hogar are filled with endless love to give. I will never forget how special it felt to be the recipient of this.

Throughout our time there, activities and events occurred where we could create sincere connections with each child. For instance, we would wake up each morning and walk the younger children to school, the whole way with them holding our hands. It was so much fun to spend time with the children, despite the language barrier. Oftentimes, the children put up with our rough attempts at Spanish and found better ways of communicating like through hand gestures.

My favorite activities that took place were face painting, eating dinner with one of the families, and attending the quinceañera. It was extremely easy to love these children and I miss them dearly. I will always remember how they had immediately welcomed and embraced us when we visited, fully submerging us in the loving community in which they are being raised.

Along with our fun, we performed acts of charity such as building benches and giving out donations. The benches that we built from scratch were for the out of condition church that Casa Hogar helps assist. Without the benches, the parish had been celebrating Mass sitting on the ground.

BEING ABLE TO WITNESS  
THEIR FACES LIGHT UP  
AND GENUINELY FEEL HOW  
GRATEFUL THEY WERE  
FOR THE GIFT, MADE ME  
REALIZE ALL THAT I TAKE  
FOR GRANTED IN MY LIFE.

Furthermore, we helped organize donations such as clothes, medicine, and school supplies for the children at Casa Hogar. They were overjoyed to receive these necessities of life and at that moment my perspective on life had changed. My wants in life were so silly compared to what they needed but viewed as unnecessary. Now, I strive to be more grateful for the things in life that I have been blessed with and use everything I have to the fullest.



The biggest impact Casa Hogar had in my life was inspiring me to grow in my spiritual journey. The children are great role models for trusting in God and practicing selflessness. They have faith that God will provide them with what they need and protect them from unforeseen circumstances. Additionally,



everything they do for each other is purely out of love. They share everything they have and take care of one another like true brothers and sisters. The children have inspired me to offer myself to do God's will and to continue to trust in Him even when it can be challenging. Seeing them practice their Faith and incorporate it in their daily lives was an eye-opening experience. Their deep love for God and desire to hear more of his Goodnews was contagious and lit everyone else's faith on fire too.

Not a day goes by where I am not grateful for the opportunity I had to visit Casa Hogar. Everywhere I go I incorporate the lessons I learned and cherish the memories that were made. The mission trip has enriched my life and has inspired me to continue being of service, trusting that God will lead me to do even greater things.

Parish Note: Another mission trip to Casa Hogar is being planned. Contact the Parish office for more information or watch for more information in upcoming issues.

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