

THE JOURNEY

Photo Credit
David Swenson

Winter
2023

Pelican Valley Catholic Community Newsletter
Our Lady of Victory, St. Elizabeth, St. Leonard



Gesu Bambino: Italian for Baby Jesus

Dear Friends,

Among the special churches that I fell in love with while in Rome is Santa Maria in Aracoeli. It is one of the most ancient and glorious basilicas, built on the Capitoline Hill at the time of emperor Octavian Augustus. The monumental 124 step staircase is a pilgrimage in itself.



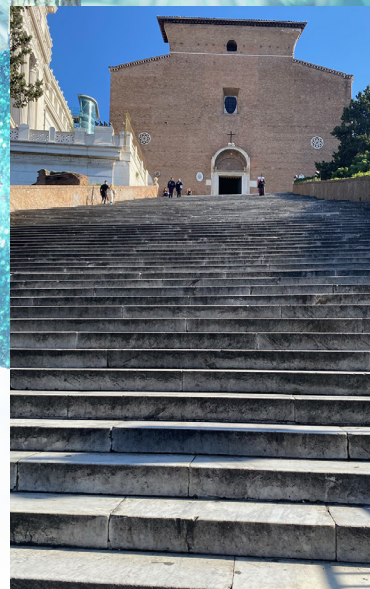
One of the historical art treasures in this church is a "miraculous" statue of "**Gesu Bambino**" or Baby Jesus. It dates to the end of the fifteenth century, a wood carving made in Jerusalem from an olive tree from Gethsemane by a pious Franciscan friar. Legend says that its painting was completed by an angel. During its trip by sea to Rome, a storm forced the friar to throw overboard the small case containing the precious treasure. But the case arrived at the port of Livorno by itself in the wake of the ship. There are many legends associated with the statue as well as the fame of miraculous healings.

Today, the Chapel of the Holy Bambino is continually visited by pilgrims from all parts of the world. Mothers, before giving birth, visit Aracoeli to receive a special blessing and also bring their children to be consecrated to the Divine Child.

During Christmastime the children of Rome uninterruptedly come to sing to the Babe. And instead of going to Santa Claus and telling him what they want for Christmas, they make their requests directly to Baby Jesus! It reminded me of the special day of Christmas Eve ten years ago when Father Lucho Palomino received word that a pharmaceutical foundation would provide his astronomically expensive leukemia medicine, free of charge! Fr. Lucho gave all the credit to Baby Jesus: many, many prayers had been answered.

May we each once more make our Christmas pilgrimage to Bethlehem (if not Aracoeli). During this holy Christmas season, let us share our deepest hopes and desires with the precious Christ Child. May you and your family receive many, many blessings of His wondrous love!

Merry and blessed Christmas! Fr. Alan



December 24th Christmas Eve Masses

4:00 PM at St. Elizabeth

4:30 PM at Our Lady of Victory

6:00 PM at St. Leonard

December 25th Christmas Day Mass

9:30 AM at Our Lady of Victory

IMPROVED BY THE HANDS OF MANY: The Rectory at St. Leonard, Pelican Rapids



Santiago Franco moves duct grills to prepare living room for painting.



Gutted Kitchen



Ivan Franco chats with parishioners as he extends the hall flooring.



"After"

Article and photos by Fr. Jeff Ethen

Members of St Leonard's Church, Pelican Rapids, are renovating the rectory in anticipation of Fr Lucho Palomino's arrival from Peru early next year.

The improvements include new flooring to replace the carpeting in the living and dining rooms, and hallway. New kitchen cabinets were installed and the bathroom will be upgraded and rooms repainted.

The workers volunteered their labor and carpentry expertise evenings and weekends.

THE WORKERS INCLUDED:

- Ivan Franco
- Carlos Chavez
- Ricardo Franco
- Porfirio Diaz
- Fermin Villagomez
- Rodolfo Nava
- Elvis Aldana
- Efrain Franco
- Constantino Franco
- Arturo Zavala
- Gonzalo Zavala
- Jesus Murillo
- Steve Marsh
- Baltasar Villagomez
- Johan Chavez
- Jesus Chavez
- Pedro Villagomez
- Phil and Cyndy stotesbery
- Carol treinen
- Julie Ann holt
- Linda Klimek
- Deacon Mario Mancilla



Santiago Franco watches his father, Ricardo Franco, measure flooring gap between kitchen and dining room.



Estaban Franco uses the dishwasher cavity to ambush unwary workers.

Baptisms

OUR LADY OF VICTORY

BOONE MITCHELL JAROSZEWSKI
Alex Jaroszewski & Shalyn Reiff
9/23/2023

OLIVE ANNE WILLIAMSCHEN
Reid & Liz Williamschen
10/28/2023



Erick Lemus played the violin at his cousin Rosaleah's baptism November 23 at St. Leonard. Rosaleah is the daughter of Alfredo and Veronica Guzman and granddaughter of Baltazar and Ernestine Martinez. Erick was visiting from Texas with his parents who are Rosaleah's Godparents.

Photo by Fr Jeff Ethen

NEW OLV MEMBERS



Ashley Arras with two of her three daughters. Not pictured, husband/father Eli Arras, who is a Registered Nurse.

ELI & ASHLEY ARRAS FAMILY

The Arras family moved to Fergus Falls and enjoy being surrounded by lakes. Their eldest girl, Jane, is registered and ready to start Children's Liturgy of the Word! Welcome.

TRACY MONTANYE

Tracy Montanye retired from being a special education assistant. He has two children; one in North Carolina and one in Pennsylvania. He previously lived on the East Coast. Glad to have you here, Tracy!



Glad to have you here, Tracy!



PETER & DOROTHY HERMES

Peter and Dorothy Hermes have been married 61 years. They are both retired. Peter taught for 35 years and Dorothy drove special needs children to school for over 20 years. They have 4 children: Paul, Janet, Teri and Tony, and seven grandkids. Peter likes to hunt, fish and "tinker." Dorothy loves bridge and traveling. Please help welcome Peter and Dorothy to OLV!

GENEVA BUSKO

Geneva moved to Fergus Falls as she has two sons living here. She also has four daughters living in North Dakota. Geneva has a big family tree with 15 grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild! Welcome Geneva.

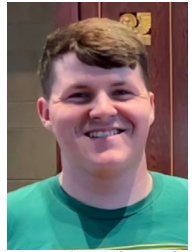


LENORE AARNES

Lenore Aarnes moved to Fergus Falls from Brainerd when she retired. She has two children and six grandchildren who live in Montana and Colorado. Welcome Lenore!

AIDEN BRUCK

Aiden is the youngest of a family of five, raised in Central Illinois. He moved with his mother to Minnesota in 2016, and is one of two siblings in the Fergus Falls area.

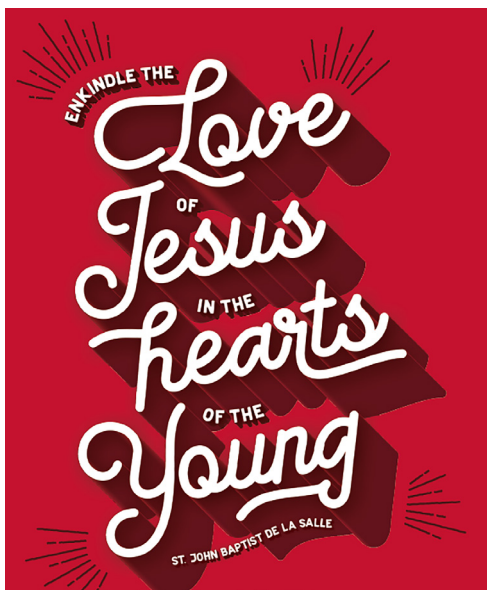


Aiden had been involved with helping at OLV high school Faith Formation, the Summer Saints program, and with gathering a group of parish young adults. Aiden currently is studying special education at Moorhead State, and works part time at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Moorhead in their faith formation/youth ministry programs.

KALEB & RACHEL KOSAK



Kalen and Rachel indicated that they joined OLV out of a desire to raise their family close to their extended family. They like to read and cook together. Additionally, they enjoy gardening, making ice cream, and fishing. Glad to have you join our parish.



OLV Facility Campaign

There are many areas of OLV's roof that must be repaired (serious leaks and damage). There is also a need for new sanctuary lights (current lights are out of code and a fire risk).

OUR GOAL FOR THIS CAMPAIGN IS TO RAISE \$200,000.

Please give what you can, any way you can!

God bless you!



CONFIRMATION RETREAT

By Deb Forstner, Faith Formation Facilitator

On the road to the Sacrament of Confirmation, students participate in a one-day retreat. At OLV on November 18th, students from all three parishes of our ACC, along with St. Olaf in Elbow Lake, Our Lady of the Runestone in Kensington, and St. Mary in Breckenridge, spent the day at their retreat. The main retreat presenters were Scott Frieler and Scott Crumb, experienced youth ministers and Confirmation retreat facilitators of the St. Cloud Diocese. We were blessed by volunteers from our ACC to help

lead small groups: Jenny McGraw and Eric Leopold of OLV; Nick Kunz of St. Elizabeth; and Alejandra Mancilla of St. Leonard. Adults from the other three parishes also assisted as small group leaders, and Emily Hebert and Deb Forstner served in coordinating/behind the scenes roles. Please keep all Confirmation candidates in your prayers. It is such an important year in their lives as Catholics, and we as church will benefit from the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit that they bring to us.



Liturgical environment is so important in helping us focus on each event of the liturgical year. At OLV, Mary Loreno and Beverly Miller lead this committee. Here is an example of how the Ambo (lectern from which readings and Gospel, etc. are proclaimed) was enhanced on the Feast of Christ the King.



HIGH SCHOOL FAITH FORMATION

By Deb Forstner, Faith Formation Facilitator

Jeff Jennen, high school catechist, opened his portion of a recent Wednesday evening class by telling the students (and parents who were there for Confirmation stations held later) that he likes to build things. So to share the joy he feels in building with those in attendance, Jeff and other members of the team distributed spaghetti noodles and miniature marshmallows. There was a time limit for small groups to work together to build the highest structure possible. As you'll see from the pictures, the groups were ingenious and experienced a great deal of success!



First Reconciliation

On December 2, twenty-three students from OLV experienced the graces of their First Reconciliation. Then as part of weekend Masses, they each received a blessed Catholic Children's Bible as a gift from the parish. Here is a picture of 15 of the students at the 9:30 Mass. Please pray for these children, their catechists and families as they now prepare for their First Communion in April.

ST. LEONARD FAITH FORMATION TEAM



L-R: Azucena Rojas, First Reconciliation and First Communion; Susana Franco, grades 3 and 4; Deacon Mario Mancilla, Confirmation; Alejandra Mancilla, Grades 7 and 8; Hana Villagomez, grades 5 and 6

This team of adults met in the St. Leonard basement with OLV's Faith Formation Facilitator, Deb Forstner, to discuss faith formation programming. The St. Leonard catechist team decided that for grades 2-8, they would utilize the bilingual teaching editions and student workbooks from Loyola Press. These teachers had also attended a Diocesan workshop led by Christine Pinto that focused upon learning about their gifts/charisms. Thank you for sharing your gifts and time with our youth.



Fr. Jeff Ethen (center) with parishioners from St. Leonard on his birthday

As a child, Fr. Jeff Ethen did not like that his November 1st birthday is also All Saints Day; a holy day of obligation. "What kid wants to go to church on his big day every year?" he admitted. God got the last laugh when he was ordained. "I was then going to church up to three times on All Saints!" Fr. Jeff asks us to imagine how he would have turned out being born a day earlier, on Halloween! As you can see, Fr. Jeff had plenty of people surrounding him on his big day this year. Thanks for your helpful ministry to our ACC, Fr. Jeff!



At the OLV Catholic Daughters Bake Sale this November, parishioner Darlene Draeger not only purchased a delicious coffee cake, she was pleasantly surprised to reveal the plate it came on! "Friendship: God Loving Us Through Another." The Catholic Daughter who baked that coffee cake and donated not only her baking but this special plate truly acted out of friendship!

All Saints Eve at St. Leonard

The evening of October 31st, both children and adults dressed up as saints. Thanks to Alejandra Mancilla for these beautiful photos!



Representation at Diocesan Hispanic Meeting

Story and photo by Fr. Jeff Ethen

Deacon Mario and Alejandra Mancilla met in October with Bishop Patrick Neary, OSC, and other Hispanic ministers at a quarterly diocesan Hispanic ministry meeting. Members also include Pelican Valley pastor Fr. Alan Wielinski, and Fr. Jeff Ethen, former Pelican Rapids pastor and current Diocesan Multi-cultural Office associate.

The regular meetings allow the bishop, who speaks Spanish and had served in Chile, to guide the Hispanic spirituality and justice endeavors.

The Mancillas are also diocesan representatives with the National

Bishops' Hispanic Encuentro, which met recently in Houston to discuss family and youth issues. The Mancillas, who live in Pelican Rapids, represent Region VIII that includes Minnesota, the Dakotas and Wisconsin.

Alejandra and Deacon Mario Mancilla, seated at far table, consulted with Bishop Patrick Neary CSC during a Diocesan Hispanic Ministry meeting. Members include Fr. Alan Wielinski, Pelican Valley ACC pastor, and former Pelican Rapids pastor, Fr. Jeff Ethen.



Rock of Faith: Bringing Your Family Closer to Jesus

By Deb Forstner

As Christmas draws near, you may want to be aware of small businesses which promote our Catholic faith, with love of the saints and our Lord Jesus, for young children to adults. This certainly is not an exhaustive list, but some places you may want to check out to get started.

Holy Heroes...Includes "Advent Survival Kit"; board games, such as a new one called "Journeys of St. Paul" and "Road to Bethlehem"; special playing cards where each suit is assigned to one of the mysteries of the rosary, and the face cards represent a "true royal court" (Aces, the Holy Spirit; Kings, Christ the King; Queens, the Blessed Virgin Mary; and Jacks, St. Joseph). The Holy Heroes website also includes free Catholic activities for children and their families. Just sign up for what you want and they'll be emailed to you.

Tiny Saints... This company sells cute little charms depicting saints that can be hung from a backpack or purse. They currently of-

fer a special edition of the Nativity. Board books are also offered, with titles such as "The Saints are Watching Over Me" and "You Do Not Need to Worry." They also sell child-friendly rosaries.

Shininglightdolls.com... On this website you can find a book about Mary's appearances around the world, Nativity cookie cutters and stamps, saint toys and magnets, a wooden Mass playset, and more.

The Saintmaker Catholic Life Planner... www.thesaintmaker.com More for older teens and adults, a variety of products are offered through this website, including a Catholic Life Planner, a Liturgical Guide with all the feast days, and the "Daily Saint" which is a 5-minute spiritual journal.

Future issues of the Journey would love to hear from you about other helpful sites and resources! May 2024 be one of your best spiritual years yet.



Picture taken at our ACC's Summer Saints Program July 2023

OLV School Scoop: The Dance

By Sarah Schroeder, OLV Sixth Grade Student

Along with many fun activities at OLV School, a favorite to all the students was the school dance on October 13th. At the doors, there were neon glowsticks which would later light up the gym. It started out as a few people just walking around; not dancing. More people started piling in as a family dressed in unicorn pajamas came in. They looked like they were having a lot of fun. In the first half of the dance Mr. Raths, our principal, was playing music and inviting all the parents to do the chicken dance with the kids and teachers. Not only were there students, parents, and teachers at the dance, there were also siblings and former OLV students. The energy of the dance rose when one

of the former 6th grade students started a train that eventually led through the fellowship hall. Most of the older kids were not only dancing with their friends but with their "best friends", the preschoolers. Toward the end of the dance, Mr. Raths announced the total funds that had been raised at the annual marathon, which was \$15,452! When he announced the total, everyone cheered, but they were more excited that Mr. Raths had to kiss Talia, the baby pig, which he had promised if they met or exceeded their \$11,000 goal. At the end of the dance, people were even more upbeat that they went, and we all agreed the dance was a blast!



Jake Raths kisses Talia the pig in front of OLV students and staff as a reward for great School Marathon fundraising. Pig held by Tessa Hatlestad.

DONATIONS HELP KEEP FAITH FORMATION POPPING!



Bonnie Hein, faithful popcorn making volunteer for elementary Faith Formation, about to put the first cup of oil in OLV's new Popcorn Machine!

The old popcorn popper owned by OLV Church, used for faith formation classes and evangelization events, was grease-caked and falling apart after many years of use. When Rhonda Antrim Petersen learned of this problem, she noted that this purchase of a new popper is exactly the kind of thing the Antrim Family Foundation was

designed to support. The Antrim Family Foundation was incorporated in 2014 by Dan and Rhonda Antrim, for the purpose of promoting Catholic evangelization and helping the needy. When Dan passed away in 2016, the foundation also dedicated memorials that honor him, such as S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) educational events, and activities which promote quality family time, hunting and fishing.

For the purpose of promoting Catholic Evangelization, Rhonda and the foundation view this as bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself. They see evangelization as a continuous three-step process:

- Discovering Jesus through a personal encounter with Him
- Following Jesus, becoming his disciple
- Proclaiming the Good News is to be a witness of Jesus

Rhonda stated that Faith Formation at OLV is integral in helping our young Catholics build on their discovery of Jesus, grow their personal relationship with Jesus, and inspire them to become disciples and witnesses for others. We are blessed by the Antrim Foundation's stewardship of sharing treasure. Faith Formation has also received additional private donations that have allowed us to give other extras for the support of our students and volunteer catechists. We are grateful for this generosity.



Fifth Grade Science: The Egg Drop

By Trevor Larson, OLV School Teacher - Photos by Fr. Jeff Ethen

This past month the 5th grade class was hard at work on their Egg Drop Project. They are tasked with building a one foot by one foot enclosure, with an egg in the middle, that will survive a fall from the top of the school roof. The students were given two school days to work on it in school, and the rest was done outside of school.

As a class, they researched and talked about how companies ship out their products and what they use to ensure that the products get there safely. Students created their own list of materials that they could use from their houses to serve as a barrier. Students also made possible prototypes that could be used in the project. After weighing what materials and design would give them the best possible solution, students created their enclosure.

After two weeks of work, students brought their enclosures to school. They then presented their enclosures to the 5th grade class. They talked about what materials they used, why they used them, and why they think their design would be successful in protecting the egg inside. After presenting

their enclosures, they went outside to watch their projects take flight. One by one, Mr. Larson dropped each project. With the help of Mrs. Clark, each student would open their enclosure to see the results. After each result was recorded, the class went inside to talk about the results and to see if there was any direct correlation between the speed at which each project fell,

and the success, or lack thereof, of each project.

Overall, each student did a great job of creating their own design and enclosure. The students learned a great deal about what companies need to do to ensure their products get out to satisfied customers. Students also learned how to try and decrease the velocity of their projects as they fell.

LEFSE MAKING BENEFITS ST. ELIZABETH

By Marla Kunz



L-R - Front: Samantha, Julia and Marla Kunz, Sandy Gravelle, Bonnie Kunz, Kathy Crawford; Back Row: Wayne Crawford, Anna Kunz, Doug Klomstad, Molly Mahler, Patty Nelson



Bonnie & Marla Kunz

Nothing says the holidays better than family traditions and special foods. If you are from the Midwest, more than likely you grew up with a yummy plate of lefse at your holiday celebrations. Whether you eat it with butter, sugar, cinnamon or honey, we all can agree that it is a special treat for those of us who like Scandinavian foods. At St. Elizabeth parish, we have made a family tradition of making lefse for the members of our parish and the surrounding community for almost thirteen years.

My brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Ross and Bonnie Kunz, along with myself and our families have been making lefse together for the holidays for many years. Both of our families enjoy making and eating fresh, homemade lefse using Bonnie's family recipe. It is a labor intensive process as we use real potatoes, but we find that the extra work is worth it as the flavor just can't be beat. We have made many great memories over the years with our children, laughing and bonding during our lefse making escapades.

About 13 years ago, when I was the coordinator for our parish Youth Group, Bonnie and I discussed the idea of taking this fun, family tradition and turning it into an opportunity to raise money for our Youth Group. Thus, we began a new lefse venture. Our operation was small back then, consisting of just our families, and we made the lefse out of Ross and Bonnie's kitchen. Over the years as our orders began to multiply, we needed more help and a bigger kitchen space. That is when we made the decision to move our lefse making operation to Brenny Hall and began recruiting the help of willing extended family members, neighbors and friends. Over time, the needs of our parish have changed and our popularity for making homemade lefse grew, along with the proceeds. We then made the decision to use the profits from our lefse to provide top raffle prizes for our Pork Out church festival held every year in August.

The biggest change to our lefse making and selling occurred

Continued on Page 11.



Funeral Luncheons Bring Solace after Losing Loved Ones

Story & Photos by Tom Hintgen



OLV funeral luncheon volunteers, front from left, Bonnie Hein, Georgie Waasdorp, Gerry Leonard, Sonia Mueller, Marietta Bullis and Sharon Stevens. Back, from left, Otis Anderson, Vince Thoma, Max Wilhelmy, Wayne Mueller, Irma Roers, Sharon Rittenour and Paulette Hoebelheinrich.

Annette Anderson, who heads funeral luncheons following the Mass and tributes to a loved one at Our Lady of Victory Church, takes pride along with fellow volunteers in giving comfort and a place of fellowship during an emotional day.

"We do our best to perform our duties as to what the family of the deceased person wants us to do," said Anderson, a member of OLV since the year 1995 after moving to Fergus Falls from New Ulm, Minn.

She was a volunteer for funeral lunches for many years before taking over as overall coordinator in 2022. This job was formerly headed by Meanie Ricks. There are 11 groups on which to call for assistance, with performing all needed luncheon duties following a funeral.

There have been changes over the years. Not that long ago volunteers prepared dishes such as scalloped potatoes and ham. Parish groups supplied cakes. There also was the standard menu of sandwiches, chips and coleslaw. Families paid for the luncheons directly to the church

Today, more often than not, families coordinate with caterers such as the American Legion in Fergus Falls. The funeral home pays the individual caterer.

"Even with caterers, we still need volunteers to prepare tables

and perform other duties in the fellowship hall," Anderson said. "Long before a funeral Mass starts at 11 a.m., our volunteers will be here as early as 9 a.m."

There are placements needed to be positioned on tables, coffee to prepare, coordination with water and glasses on tables, and finetuning with the caterers.

"Our volunteers do this as a labor of love," Anderson said. "I am fortunate to have good and caring people who head up each of our 11 groups who provide assistance for the funeral luncheons."



Committee Chair:
Annette Anderson

People go through two lines when there are more than 100 people. This makes for an easy process for guests after the funeral Mass.

"Families really appreciate our volunteer efforts, and this make it all worthwhile," Anderson said.

A to-do list helps, as follows:

- Setting buffet tables with linen cloths, food, plates, napkins and eating utensils
- Preparing and serving water, lemonade and coffee
- Setting tables with compostable placemats and seasonal centerpieces
- Welcoming and directing guests
- Replenishing the buffet table as necessary
- Cleaning up

KICKING OFF ANOTHER HOLIDAY SEASON

Photo & Article by Carrie Wedll



The St. Elizabeth Holiday Expo 2023 was fun for all. We had around thirty vendors. There was also a bake sale, and our Christian Women's group served soup and sandwiches.

Walking Each Other Home

By Marlene Gease

On the front page in the last issue of the Journey, editor Deb Forstner talked about the comfort of the Eucharist and its strengthening and sustaining effect through difficult times, such as her recent experience of her mom passing away. Talking about death is not a comfortable social norm in our culture and anticipation of death is always difficult. Within her story, Deb alluded to sharing our journey home back to the Creator, along with the wonderful opportunity that even death gives us to share in a spiritual experience,

There was a little picture with Deb's article contributed by Darlene Draeger, with the phrase "We are all just walking each other home." In the book, "Walking Each Other Home", two friends and modern day luminaries reunite when coauthor Ram Dass learns he is terminally ill. He is comforted as he visits with his longtime friend and associate Mirabai Bush, sharing personal stories, longings and insights to process this thing death, and its purpose and meaning. They shared fearlessly; gently exploring his life's journey and its lessons, his teachings, while sharing with honesty, humor and courage what it means to live and die consciously. Mirabai wisely records their conversations and later publishes their book, resulting in this candid dialogue between two close friends shedding light on death's significance on the spiritual path we take back home. Within the book, you'll hear from these two beloved teachers about the spiritual opportunities within sharing the dying process. They provide guidance for being a "loving rock" for the dying at their end-of-life journey and how to "grieve fully and authentically".

With this, I'd like to share a reflection of my own experience coming to terms with the fear of death. When my father-in-law, my daughter's grandfather, died suddenly from a brain tumor, I struggled with how I would share the news with my daughter Kathleen (age 5). I now was having to explain to her on her level about something she had never yet encountered in her

young life, her beloved Papa had died. I felt compelled to go and talk to my pastor, Fr. Sherman, at St Michael's Church. Fr Sherman was a well-respected scholar, author and beloved shepherd. I trusted that of anyone walking the earth, he would know the answers to my questions about death. He could allay my fear.

I needed to know, what was it like to die, what is heaven really, and how do we know and make sure we get there? Father Sherman's bright blue eyes twinkled as he pushed his hand through his thinning snow-white hair, and he drew a deep breath. Looking thoughtfully at me, he smiled at this rather nervous, pensive young lady sitting on the edge of her chair, leaning forward to catch every word.

We talked a good long time about the sacraments, including the Eucharist, and living a life of service, but he ended the conversation with this, and I will never forget it, because it quelled my doubt and my personal fear of death.

"Marlene, you know hell isn't something we easily achieve... It's not something one just bumps into. One pretty much has to make a decision that's where they want to go, versus wanting to serve in friendship with Jesus and in devotion with creator, God. We work hard here on earth to serve Him and we will continue to work hard for Him in Heaven. However," he paused for a moment and leaned closer to me, "I have come to the conclusion after much study, prayer and thought, heaven will be for each of us whatever it is we want it to be that makes us happy. That we will have the privilege of dreaming up and co-creating whatever it is that will give us joy." He smiled at me again, very broadly, his eyes brightening all the more and continued in a very serious tone, "I don't know about you, Marlene, but I'm going to spend every free sunny afternoon there out on the lake in my boat fishing!" Wow.

So, with this preparation, I explained to my five-year-old daughter what death was (spirit and soul leaving our earthly body and going home to heaven, etc.). She looked

up at me and asked, "Mommy, what is heaven?". And I knew in my heart what to say: That it was a place we could all be together with those we loved and that it could be anything wonderful she wanted it to be. And in her own unique methodical way that was only Kat, I could see her turning this idea very carefully. I waited. Finally, she very earnestly asked the next best question in a way only an innocent child can. "OK Mommy, but would it be OK if we go together and hold hands?"

She got it. It was about "walking each other home". As Fr. Sherman advised, heaven is what we will create it to be. Death is not something to fear. It is a coming home to something wonderful that we will co-create with those we love. It's actually maybe something amazing we could look forward to. Death is just the jumping off place. It's worth thinking and talking about, and sharing in a loving way.

Lefse Making Benefits Continued from Page 9

about 5 years ago when we were approached by our parish Christian Mothers' group to sell lefse at their St. Elizabeth's Holiday Expo. The Holiday Expo provided the perfect place to sell homemade lefse to the community for the holidays as it is always held the weekend before Thanksgiving. In the past couple of years, we have seen tremendous support for our lefse as we have been making anywhere between 800- 1000 sheets of lefse. This fall we sold out in 45 minutes! Ya! You betcha! We were shocked!

Turning our family tradition of making lefse into a parish family tradition has been a fun adventure over the years. It has given us the opportunity to meet so many new people, not only from our parish but from the other parishes within our ACC cluster and surrounding community. It has given us great satisfaction to be able to share our love of making lefse with the community by providing them with a yummy holiday treat that they can enjoy and share with their families. It's true what they say, "The kitchen is the heart of the home." Food is a great unifier. We all love to eat!

**PELICAN VALLEY AREA
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY**

Our Lady of Victory, St. Elizabeth, St. Leonard

**C/O 207 North Vine Street
Fergus Falls, MN 56537**



WEEKEND MASSES

Saturday 4:30 pm Our Lady of Victory
Sunday 8:30 am St. Elizabeth
Sunday 9:30 am Our Lady of Victory
Sunday 10:30 am St. Leonard
Sunday 12:00 pm St. Leonard Spanish Mass

*Our Lady of Victory School
(K-6th grade)
Learning Ladder Preschool
(3-5 year olds, full
and half day)
218/736-6661
www.ffolvschool.org*



REFLECTIONS
OF AN OLD MAN
Alone at Christmas?

It appears as though Margaret and I may be spending Christmas “alone” this year. All four of our much-loved and loving sons and their lovely wives, scattered from Idaho to a Chicago suburb, will be celebrating the occasion with their children, grandchildren, in-laws or some combination thereof—which is as it should be.

You may have noticed that I put the word “alone” in quotation marks in the first sentence. There’s a reason for that. Though there may be only the two of us on that special day, we are, even after 65 years of marriage, never really alone as long as we have one another. That’s as true all year as it is on Christmas.

But it’s at Christmas, especially, that we see in our minds’ eyes first one, then two, then three, then four little boys experiencing the joy of those Christmas Eves and mornings. Little boys rejoicing over their rocking horse, Johnny Eagles, a giant stuffed frog, Candy Land, official NFL helmets (Vikings, Packers, Bears, Redskins), walkie-talkies, a tool kit, a chemistry set and rock polisher, Monopoly, a Lite Brite, a talking football game, an Etch-a-Sketch, Legos, Sorry, Lincoln Logs, Tinker Toys, and scores of like gifts. What joy those moments bring us!

Memorable as those moments are, even more memorable—and powerful—are those of four young boys, year after year, wearing sharply creased pants and freshly-ironed shirts, standing before the crèche taking turns reading Luke’s telling of the birth of Christ and the Angels’ message of joy and peace. Does it get any better?

So, even though we may be spending this Christmas “alone,” we will not be spending it alone! We will have one another, and all the blessings God has showered upon us. And the memory of those four beautiful little (and eventually not-so-little) boys reading the angels’ message, will remind us of how blessed we are to still have the means to bring at least some measure of joy and peace to a few of the millions of our suffering brothers and sisters around the world and in our own community who are not enjoying the peace and joy that are ours.

Merry Christmas!

Lee Krogh