

SPRING 2023

Generous Hearts

Inspired
by the
Spirit

In this issue:

GRANT DOLLARS AT WORK

JOYFUL RESPONSE TO
PARISH FUND

DO YOUR CHILDREN
SEE YOU GIVE?

PLANNING IS EVERYTHING

A publication brought to you by



**CATHOLIC
FOUNDATION**
of West Michigan



This year's themed content is accompanied by a unique icon that represents the Holy Spirit's loving guidance. When you see this icon, you'll know that the story is part of the Inspired by the Spirit series of messages.

Our 2023 theme, Inspired by the Spirit, is an exploration of the spark provided by the Holy Spirit's persistent illumination in our daily lives.

As an instrument through which the faithful are moved, the Holy Spirit guides us to offer comfort and aid to others. The Spirit grounds our mission to effect positive change and to do more to support our local Catholic community.

Each Catholic Foundation gift, project, and event is made possible through generous people inspired by the Spirit. As you discover the many ways in which the Holy Spirit has inspired our latest endeavors, we encourage you to consider how the Spirit has touched your life and those within your community.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Corinthians 3:17



From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Time and time again, I find myself in awe of the Holy Spirit at work in my life. Sometimes I am aware of the Spirit working in the moment, while something is happening right then and there. But oftentimes, I see the Spirit's work more clearly in hindsight – whether that's recounting the day's events on the drive home or reflecting on a topic from a previous chapter of my life.

Whether you're aware of the Spirit's presence in the moment or realize it later, it's hard to deny the Spirit moves through and among us in beautiful, unexpected ways. Whatever you call these moments – coincidence, God winks, divine intervention, providential choreography, or some other phrase – they are inspired by the Spirit to draw us closer to God. I am grateful for each and every one of them.

I am doubly blessed to see the Spirit at work through the mission of the Catholic Foundation. Through our annual theme, "Inspired by the Spirit," we seek to capture some of these amazing examples from the people and occurrences that reflect the fruits of the Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

By exploring and sharing these moments, we hope these examples will encourage you to consider how the Spirit has touched your own life and how it may be leading you to reflect these fruits in your words and actions. Please enjoy this issue of *Generous Hearts* and know of our gratitude for your support of our Church and her ministries.

Greg Deja
Executive Director

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Mission

We inspire and enable generous support for parishes and ministries rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church to make a lasting impact in our communities and the lives of others.

Funding Priorities

Sharing Our Catholic Faith
Educating Children & Young Adults
Supporting Religious Vocations
Helping the Poor and Vulnerable
Caring for Creation

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Welcoming our new Gift Planning Officer

The Catholic Foundation welcomes Teresa Reid as our new gift planning officer. Teresa brings more than 15 years of experience in developing philanthropic partnerships with corporations, foundations, families, and individuals in the Washington D.C. and the greater Grand Rapids regions. In her role, Teresa will continue to enhance the Foundation's ability to serve donors in realizing their charitable intentions for the betterment of the Church and her many ministries, particularly in the area of planned giving. Teresa and her husband, Justin, have two children and are parishioners at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Grand Rapids. Welcome, Teresa!



Teresa and her family



Kathy and Kevin McDowell

Thanking our Trustee

The Catholic Foundation wishes to thank Kevin McDowell for his years of service to the Catholic Foundation. Kevin first joined the Advisory Board in 2017, playing an instrumental role in guiding the Foundation's mission through a multi-year strategic plan with an expanded governance structure. In 2020, Kevin became the first lay Trustee to serve on the Catholic Foundation's Board of Trustees. For the past two years, Kevin has chaired the Donor Services Council, offering perspectives from the donor's point of view, informing the Foundation's stewardship efforts, and crafting experiences for relationship-building and engagement.

As his three-year term as Trustee concludes this June, we know he will remain an ambassador, especially in Holland, where he resides with his wife Kathy. We are grateful for Kevin's commitment to the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan and for his spirit of generosity. Thank you, Kevin!

Community Impact Grants

INAUGURAL LOVE AND CHARITY EVENT

The Catholic Foundation of West Michigan's inaugural Love and Charity Event was a huge success. Donors, businesses, and nonprofit leaders joined the Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak to celebrate the work of nonprofits effecting positive change in our communities.

At the reception, the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan presented \$52,000 in grants to the following nonprofits:

- Grandmother's Cupboard Baby Pantry, a ministry of St. Ann Parish in Baldwin, MI
- God's Village, a comprehensive grouping of family support and programming provided by Catholic Charities West Michigan
- Grace's Table in Grand Rapids, which provides support for teen mothers
- Scholarships for Diocese of Grand Rapids World Youth Day pilgrims (more on page 6)

We are so grateful for all of you who supported these grants as a Bishop's Angel or by sponsoring or attending the Catholic Business Leaders Forums.



Bishop Walkowiak presents Leaders in Generosity grants to Jeremy Barber and Holly Daly, Grace's Table representatives (left); Christine McCarty and Father Eugene Batungbacal, C.Ss.R., World Youth Day pilgrimage representatives. 2nd row: Greg Deja



Grant Dollars at Work

Young Catholics Anticipate World Youth Day

This summer, more than 20 adults from across the Diocese of Grand Rapids will travel to Lisbon, Portugal for World Youth Day. The experience is more than a mere vacation, however. This worldwide celebration with Pope Francis brings together millions of young people aged 18-34 to worship together, providing a sense of unity with the Catholic Church. Attendees of the experience are called pilgrims, reflecting a journey to a special place for a religious reason.

Pilgrim Devin Jenkins is looking forward to the new experience. "I want to know God deeper, in a different light, and see him from a different perspective," he said. "To have the opportunity to meet other Catholics from all over the world would shine a light on a new part of Jesus's love and beauty that I have not yet seen. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me."

Devin converted to the Catholic faith two years ago and attributes his faith journey, in part, to the power of communal experiences. **"There are so many people who want to grow themselves, help others, and change people's lives," he said. "When you bring that together, that's such an intoxicating, amazing environment."** Through experiences on retreats, attending March for Life, and participating in local Catholic groups, Devin's faith has always been inspired by those around him. He sees World Youth Day as the ultimate environment in which to have an encounter with Christ. "With this trip, I'll be with all these people who have the same beliefs, ideals, and values. It doesn't matter where you are, all of these people are gathered in one spot for Christ."

Devin is one of ten pilgrims receiving a scholarship through the Catholic Foundation's Leaders in Generosity Grant. This grant, made possible by the generous support of the local business community, is giving these pilgrims the opportunity to grow in faith together and to share with the world the hopes of young adults who are committing their lives to Christ and His Church.

When pilgrims return home to their faith communities, Devin believes their example will inspire those around them. "Young adults can be a shining light and show that we are strong and our faith is true. If people do that, take it home, and embrace it, it'll be life changing for a lot of people."



Christine McCarty, director of youth and young adult ministry; Devin Jenkins, and Rev. Eugene T. Batungbacal, C.Ss.R., assistant director of youth and young adult ministry

Scholarship Recipients

AN INVITATION FROM GOD

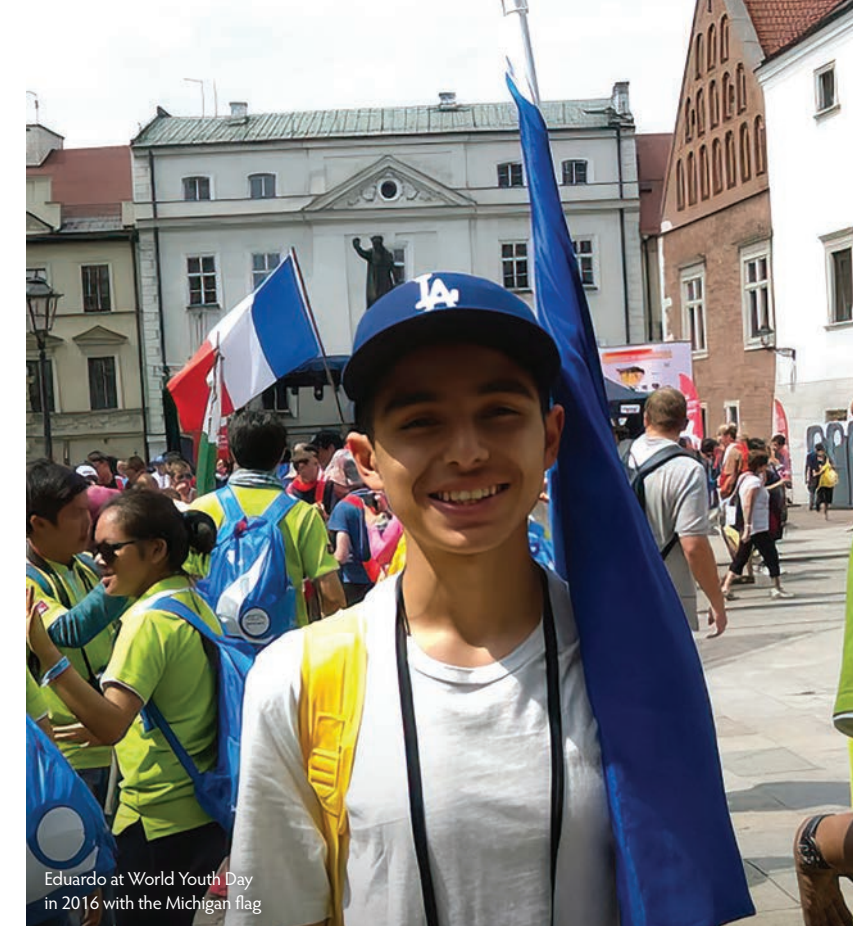
While stopping for coffee, a World Youth Day flyer caught the eye of Eduardo Gomez. Eduardo skimmed the flyer and later shared, "I felt the chills start at my shoulders and run down all the way to my fingertips reading the header of the ad." He got his coffee and went on his way to work, reflecting on the World Youth Day pilgrimage he took to Krakow, Poland in 2016.

He didn't think much of the flyer in the following days, but he felt a small spark, an invitation from God. A month later, Eduardo received his second invitation from God when his parish, St. Francis de Sales (Holland), made an announcement that they were holding an informational meeting on World Youth Day. His fond memories from Krakow and his belief the pilgrimage will "allow us to grow our trust, confidence, faith, and relationship with God" led Eduardo to say "yes" to God's invitation.

VOICE OF THE YOUTH

Clara Thelen, a 2023 high school graduate, views World Youth Day as a unique opportunity for the voices of Catholic youth to be heard. "In a world where faith is so small, to be able to gather with so many youth who share the same religion is extremely rare and will be so fruitful," she said. **"Our voice has a place and a purpose in our world today!"**

Clara is looking forward to exploring the significance of youth in our world today, deepening her relationship with the Lord, and immersing herself in Portuguese culture. She said, "I truly believe that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that God has put in place for me."



Eduardo at World Youth Day in 2016 with the Michigan flag



Clara Thelen

"...the whole Church, in union with the Successor of Peter, must be more and more committed, globally, to youth and young adults – and to their anxieties and concerns and to their openness, hopes, and expectations."

Pope John Paul II



Joyful Response to New Parish Legacy Fund

St. Patrick – St. Anthony Parish has been a tangible and spiritual blessing to countless brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the tri-cities (Grand Haven, Spring Lake, and Ferrysburg) for more than 165 years.

However, until recently, the parish had not formalized a way to financially support its mission in perpetuity. Rev. Chuck Schwartz shared his philanthropic vision with the parish finance council, expressing his belief that it was essential for the parish to commit to its long-term vitality by establishing a parish legacy fund. He shared, **“By creating a parish legacy fund, we are inviting parishioners to support the parish long after they have gone home to God. Current parishioners, in fellowship with future generations of parishioners, can help ensure the vital work of the parish for years to come.”**

The parish formed a committee of staff and lay leaders to help bring Father Chuck’s vision to life. Last fall, the parish established the St. Patrick – St. Anthony Parish Legacy Fund, a permanent endowment that distributes a portion of the fund’s balance to the parish each year to financially support three priorities:

1. Formation and worship programs
2. Christian service ministry
3. Facility maintenance and capital improvements

These priorities reflect a commitment to the parish’s Catholic mission today while ensuring that the funds

are prudently invested and stewarded for the future of the parish through a partnership with the Catholic Foundation. In order to not compete with annual fundraising efforts, the parish legacy fund invites parishioners to consider leaving a financial gift upon their passing (also known as a planned gift).

With the fund established, parish staff, the finance council and the Catholic Foundation worked collaboratively to introduce the giving opportunity and raise awareness within the parish. Together, they created announcements and educational materials, invited and met one-on-one with donors, and hosted three informational sessions at the parish. Parishioners enthusiastically supported the invitation. **“We wanted to express our gratitude to the Lord and to this parish family,”** said Mark and Phyllis Ventocilla. **“We are pleased the parish is moving in this direction and are happy to participate.”**

“Including the parish in one’s own personal estate planning really resonated with our parishioners,” stated Colleen Mitchell, a parishioner and member of the finance council. “By publicizing this opportunity, we learned right away that several parishioners had already made the decision to include our parish in their legacy giving plans but did not know how to move forward. We listened to parishioners share how important and valuable their parish family is to them, and that they want to ensure that future generations will also be able to experience the love of Christ among a financially-supported church.”

In total, 31 participants attended the informational sessions or had a confidential conversation with a parish representative. Others discerned privately and consulted with their professional advisors. The fund was promoted consistently for several weeks, resulting in several new endowments and multiple known planned gifts. The parish’s efforts were so successful they elected to host a celebratory brunch with Father Chuck, inviting everyone who made or is considering making a gift.

Jimmy Beauchamp, parish administrator, envisions the potential this fund will have on the parish’s operation over the long term. “We are so grateful for our parishioners who have chosen to support our legacy fund today or in their estate plans. A strong endowment will simply make our parish more financially stable for the next generation,” he reflected.

The fruits of these efforts were made possible through the work of Holy Spirit, Father Chuck’s leadership, prayer, planning, and using the gifts and talents of those around the parish. **“We have found the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan to be an excellent resource and partner to educate our parishioners of their options for participating in our new parish legacy fund, and to actively steward, in perpetuity, the generosity from our parishioners,”** said Mitchell.

St. Patrick – St. Anthony envisions forming a “Legacy Society” of parish benefactors to recognize their generosity, pray and celebrate together, honor those who preceded them, and encourage others to join. “Participants have already grown together in communion with one another, and I’m confident the Holy Spirit will inspire additional parishioners to include the parish in their legacy giving plans over time,” said Father Chuck.

As Father Chuck transitions to his new assignment as pastor of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish (Belmont), his leadership in establishing the parish legacy fund and laying the groundwork for the Legacy Society has set the parish up for long-term strength. **“It is important for us to remember that the goal is salvation of souls, to inspire every heart to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ,”** said Father Chuck. “If we keep that idea in the forefront, this community will continue to be a spiritual home and a haven of life, love, beauty, and truth for years to come.”

“It has been a blessing to see people share their giving intentions joyfully as an expression of their faith.”

Father Chuck Schwartz



Colleen Mitchell and Father Chuck Schwartz at a parish informational session

To create your own legacy gift to your parish or to strengthen your parish’s existing endowment, contact the Catholic Foundation.

Do your children see you give? *Christian Stewardship*

With a swipe of a card at the gas pump, the tap of a phone at the grocery store, and digital billing set on autopay, how do our children see us interact with money? Prior generations saw piggy banks, parents sitting down to balance their checkbooks, and offertory envelopes dropped in the basket each Sunday. Today, with all the conveniences of managing money online, do your children see you give?

Our Catholic faith teaches us that the home is well suited for education in the virtues, and every parent wants to raise children who share. Yet, sharing is no different than any other learned behavior – it must be taught. After all, children mimic what they see, and their parents are their primary teachers. A child who never sees

a parent place an envelope in the offertory basket or volunteer at a parish event could grow up thinking, “My parents never supported the Church. Why should I?”

Since modern conveniences may also have some unintended drawbacks, make intentional time to talk with your children about how you give to the parish — both of your time and money. Your example demonstrates to them your humility, responsibility, and joy in following Jesus. And, by openly discussing the causes and charities your family supports, you can inspire a spirit of generosity within your children as they journey through life. Don’t forget to ask them if they have any causes they would like to support – their answers might surprise you!



Planning is Everything

At its simplest level, having a will or trust is important to ensure your assets and possessions end up where you want them. A thoughtful bequest can protect your family, maintain your current lifestyle, allow you to retain control of your assets, and possibly even result in receiving estate tax savings. And, equally important, having an intentional plan empowers you to define your legacy.

While legacy planning is a great way to contribute to causes you care about and create a plan that aligns with your value, only about a third of Americans have an estate plan.

Reasons why people put off estate planning:

1

Don't have the time.

Everyone is busy, but creating a will is actually a simple process and can even be done online. Your will could be the difference between leaving your family at peace or in the middle of a mess.

2

Don't like to think about death.

Your mortality may not be something you want to discuss, but why not create a plan when you are healthy? Estate planning allows you to designate custody of any minors and decide who will receive your assets after you are gone.

3

Don't think their estate is large enough to matter.

Anything you own outright (including a car or home) can be considered your “estate.” In fact, research shows over 90 percent of wealth is held in non-cash assets. If you don't have a will or a named beneficiary, whatever you own will likely end up in the probate process and cause headaches for those you love.

4

Are Intimidated.

A small percentage of people fully understand the legal jargon of estate planning, but you don't have to know it all to make a few smart decisions.

As you are creating or updating your estate plans, know that the Catholic Foundation would be honored to guide you through the process of creating your customized legacy plan.

“Love never ends.”

1 Cor. 13:8



Our Purpose

The Catholic Foundation of West Michigan is a non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to serving both our donors and our Catholic community by facilitating charitable giving to impact and sustain a more caring community reflective of Christ's love.

How are you called to share your blessings?

Allow us to support your intent and impact.

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