

FALL 2026

Generous Hearts

In this issue:

THE ROERSMAS FIND STRENGTH IN FAITH

BISHOP BARAGA ACADEMY:
TRANSFORMING LIVES IN NEWAYGO

THE GIFT OF THE CONVERSATION

PLANNING AHEAD FOR YEAR-END GIVING

A publication brought to you by



**CATHOLIC
FOUNDATION**
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Catholic Business Leaders Forums 2026–27 Series

Join fellow Catholic professionals for a dynamic breakfast series hosted by the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan and become part of a community where faith and leadership come together.

Each forum features:

- Inspiring keynotes from Catholic leaders shaping their fields
- Business insights through the lens of our shared Catholic faith
- Networking with like-minded professionals

Event Details:

7:30 – 9:00 a.m. | Doors open at 7:00 a.m.
Cathedral Square Center
360 Division Ave S., Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Your Participation Makes a Difference

When you attend or sponsor the Catholic Business Leaders Forums, you’re investing not only in your own growth, but also in the future of our Catholic community. A portion of the proceeds supports the Love & Charity grant program — funding evangelization efforts, forming young disciples, strengthening Catholic schools, and supporting families in need.



Scan to learn more and register.

Tickets: \$45 per event

Meet Our 2026–27 Keynote Speakers



NOVEMBER 18, 2026
Investing With Intention: What We Build, What We Give, and What Matters Most
Dave Hodge, CFA, CFP®
Partner & Chief Compliance Officer
NPF Investment Advisors

FEBRUARY 17, 2027
Leading at the Intersection of Faith, Science, & Sustainability
Sister Damien Marie Savino, FSE, PhD
Melchor Visiting Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Earth Sciences
Concurrent Professor
McGrath Institute for Church Life
University of Notre Dame



**ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE THIRD
SPEAKER IN OUR SERIES COMING SOON**



“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the ‘birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.”
MATTHEW 13:31-32

Letter from the Executive Director

Each fall, the harvest quietly reminds us of a simple truth: every season of abundance begins with someone willing to plant in faith.

The same is true of the life of the Church. Generations before us built vibrant parishes, strengthened Catholic schools, and nurtured ministries that continue to bear fruit today.

Now, new seeds of faith are being planted across West Michigan. In this issue, you will read stories of the lasting witness of a deacon’s legacy, a community coming together to invest in the future of our newest Catholic school, and how an estate plan can carry forward the story of what has mattered most in your life.

Stewardship is about more than meeting today’s needs. As Jesus teaches in the parable of the mustard seed, even the smallest seed, when entrusted to God, can grow into something far greater than we can imagine. In the same way, every act of generosity is an expression of trust in what God can do with what we place in His hands.

Thank you for the many ways you help share Christ’s love throughout West Michigan. We have each received something planted by those who came before us. Through your prayers, generosity, and faithful stewardship, you are helping plant what others will one day inherit. May the faith we nurture together today become a lasting gift for generations still to come.

With gratitude and prayers,

Teresa Reid

Teresa Reid
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 & Vulnerable
Caring for Creation

Tax Information

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Finding Strength in Faith Through All Seasons of Life

After decades of faith carrying them through life's many joys and storms, Deacon Jerry and Sue Roersma are giving back in a lasting way, through a legacy gift.

If you spend even a few minutes with Deacon Jerry and Sue Roersma, one thing becomes immediately clear: their marriage is a partnership shaped by decades of shared life.

They finish each other's thoughts; sometimes, a simple glance says all that needs to be said. Their memories flow together as they tell their story, revealing a comfort that feels natural and deeply familiar — the kind of bond that can only grow over decades of shared love, faith, and life experiences.

It's the quiet closeness of two people who have weathered life's storms side by side and found that God — and each other — have carried them through it all.



Deacon Jerry and Sue first met at West Catholic High School. Even in those early years, their relationship was rooted in their Catholic faith.

"When we were dating, we would go to Sunday night Mass together regularly," Deacon Jerry recalled. "We never really went through those teenage years where we drifted away from church. It was always just part of our lives."

What they could not have known then was how essential that shared foundation would become for their family and their individual journeys.

Over the course of their life together, their faith would sustain them through both great joy and profound sorrow — and ultimately, inspire the legacy they hope to leave behind.

Building a Life Together

After marrying and starting their family, Deacon Jerry and Sue eventually found their home at Holy Trinity Parish in Comstock Park.

It quickly became much more than the church they attended on Sundays. As their oldest daughter reached school age, they joined the parish and enrolled her in Holy Trinity Catholic School. Over time, the parish became the center of their family life — a place where friendships were formed, faith was nurtured, and a sense of belonging took root.

Deacon Jerry became involved in parish leadership and ministry, while Sue volunteered in countless ways, including

serving in parish activities and eventually working at Holy Trinity as a teacher's aide and librarian.

Looking back now, Sue smiles at how naturally those roles unfolded. "We were just happy to be involved in whatever needed doing," she reminisced.

Eventually, Sue returned to nursing, beginning what would become a 25-year journey at Kent Pediatrics — one that came to a meaningful close this past August as she entered retirement.

Over the years, Deacon Jerry continued working in the tool and die industry while remaining deeply involved in parish life.

But something else was quietly unfolding behind the scenes.

A Prayer Beneath the Apple Tree

In the mid-1990s, Deacon Jerry was backpacking on North Manitou Island when he experienced a moment that would eventually change the course of his life.

Sitting beneath an apple tree, he remembers praying a simple prayer. "God, you have blessed me in so many ways," he told the Lord. "If you want me to do something, just let me know. Give me a phone call and I'll do it," he joked.

And then, not long after, the diaconate came to mind.

When he returned home, Deacon Jerry wrote a letter to his pastor, Reverend John Wisneski, asking for guidance. Soon afterward, he learned the Diocese of Grand Rapids would be convening a new diaconate formation class.

Father John encouraged him to apply.

The journey took years of study and discernment, but in 2006, Deacon Jerry was ordained a permanent deacon — a calling that would eventually lead him to his current role as director of diaconate formation for the Diocese of Grand Rapids.

For Sue, the formation process was transformative in its own way.

The wives of men in the diaconate formation program are asked to participate in part of the spiritual formation alongside them, and those years of study and prayer ignited something new in her own spiritual life.

"That really strengthened my faith," she said. "Daily prayer has become an integral part of my day. It helps me place myself before God each morning and ask Him to be with me in all I do."

Deacon Jerry smiles when he hears Sue say that. "One of the goals of the program is to help the wives grow spiritually too, so I guess it worked!" he laughed.

Even more importantly, the experience deepened their marriage.

"It's been a huge blessing for our marriage," Deacon Jerry shared. "There are times when things get busy with ministry — funerals, parish needs, everything that comes with it — but even then, it's still been a huge blessing for us."

Grounded in Faith During Life's Hardest Moments

While faith has brought many blessings into their lives, it has also carried them through some of their most difficult moments.

In 2002, Sue's brother and his wife were tragically killed — a devastating loss that shook the entire family. The years that followed brought court proceedings, hearings, and appeals that seemed to reopen the wounds again and again.

"It never really goes away," Sue said quietly. "But our faith sustained us through it."

For her parents, especially, the grief was overwhelming. Yet even in the midst of that heartbreak, their Catholic faith remained the one constant that helped carry them forward.

Years later, the Roersma family would face another painful loss when their granddaughter Riley was stillborn. In response, their daughter and son-in-law created The Riley Kathryn Foundation, a nonprofit that helps families experiencing the loss of a child by assisting with funeral expenses and providing emotional support.

What began by helping just a few families in its first year has grown to serve dozens of families each year — nearly 600 in total since its founding — becoming a living tribute to Riley's memory and a source of hope for other grieving families.

"When they lost Riley, people stepped forward to help them," Deacon Jerry said softly. "Now, they're trying to help others."

Through these experiences, the Roersmas say they have seen firsthand how God places people in our lives to help carry us through the darkest moments.

"We're called to be Jesus to others, and sometimes other people are called to be Jesus for us," Deacon Jerry and Sue reflected. "In the depths of our grief, God still loves us. He's with us in the worst of times."



Giving Back in Gratitude

After more than 40 years at Holy Trinity Parish, Deacon Jerry and Sue began reflecting on the role the parish had played in their lives and how they might help ensure it continues to thrive for future generations.

With that sense of gratitude in mind, the Roersmas decided to include Holy Trinity Parish in their estate plans. Through this planned gift, they became members of the Foundation's Light of Christ Legacy Society, a community of faithful Catholics who have committed to supporting the Church through a legacy gift.

For Deacon Jerry and Sue, the decision felt less like a financial strategy and more like a natural expression of stewardship.

Founded more than 175 years ago, Holy Trinity remains a parish that continues to serve as the heart of its local community. In the surrounding rural area, many families — especially farming families — have belonged to the parish for generations, their roots stretching back decades.

That sense of continuity matters deeply to the Roersmas. The same parish that helped form their own family continues to shape the lives of new generations growing up in the area today. Through their legacy gift, they hope that Holy Trinity will continue to form families, strengthen marriages, and nurture spiritual life for many years to come.

An Invitation to Others

When asked what they would say to others in the diocese who may be considering a planned gift, Deacon Jerry and Sue return to a message rooted in both gratitude and responsibility.

For them, generosity is deeply connected to the values that have guided their marriage and their faith for decades — values reflected in the Beatitudes, the Gospel reading they chose for their wedding day.

Those words have remained a quiet guidepost throughout their lives.

"We think about the Beatitudes often," Sue said. "They remind us how we're called to live and how we're called to care for others."

That spirit of compassion and stewardship continues to shape the way they give back.

"There's so much need out there," Sue added. "We're called to support each other — spiritually, financially, and as a community."

Deacon Jerry agrees.

"God has blessed us abundantly," he said. "It's not a chore to give back. We enjoy sharing the fruits of what God has given us."

For the Roersmas, leaving a legacy gift and becoming members of the Light of Christ Legacy Society is a meaningful way to continue living out the faith that has sustained them through every joy and every storm.

A faith that has held them through loss.

A faith that has strengthened their marriage.

And a faith they hope will continue guiding the Church and the community they love for generations to come.

**"It's not a chore
to give back. We
enjoy sharing the
fruits of what God
has given us."**

- Deacon Jerry Roersma



Planting Trees, Growing Faith

Imagine planting a young tree, knowing its shade will one day offer rest to people you may never meet. In much the same way, a legacy gift leaves a lasting witness of faith by strengthening the Church's mission and helping others encounter Christ.



Living in the Shade of Their Generosity

Today, we are living in the shade and enjoying the fruit of trees planted by those who came before us. Through gifts made in their estate plans, past generations continue to shelter and nourish the Church in ways they may never have imagined.

Their legacy is evident every day — in Catholic school classrooms where children grow in faith and knowledge, through the Church's evangelization efforts that share Christ's love, when men answer God's call to the priesthood, and when families find support and hope in times of need.

Planting for the Next Generation

Every tree begins with someone willing to plant it. Every legacy of faith begins with someone willing to think beyond today. Just as we benefit from the generosity of those who came before us, we are invited to consider the legacy we will leave for those who follow us. The seeds we plant today will help the Church flourish long into the future.

We invite you to prayerfully consider how God may be calling you to support the future of the Church through a legacy gift. By remembering the Church in your estate plans, you can help ensure Her ministries remain a source of faith and hope for those who come after us.

Join the Light of Christ Legacy Society

With a bequest of any size to a Catholic parish, school, or ministry, we invite you to become a member of the Light of Christ Legacy Society — a community that honors faithful stewards while inspiring others to embrace a legacy of faith.

Together, may the seeds we plant today become a harvest of hope for the Church tomorrow.



Scan the QR code to explore your giving options, share your intentions, or learn more about legacy giving through the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan.

cfwmlegacy.org/give



A New School. A Growing Impact. A Lasting Legacy.

Bishop Baraga Academy at Two Years

Just two years after opening its doors, Bishop Baraga Academy is transforming lives throughout Newaygo County, far beyond the walls of its classrooms.

As the county's only Catholic school — and its first Montessori school — the Academy offers something families had long been seeking: a faith-filled education that nurtures the whole child. From the early childhood center and preschool opening in August 2024 to the lower elementary classroom (K-2) opening this school year, the Academy fosters in children a lifelong love of learning and a deeper relationship with Christ.



Success You Can Measure

Since the beginning, Bishop Baraga Academy has sought to honor the timeless mission of Catholic education while embracing innovative models that meet the realities of today's families and their community. This led to the Montessori approach and microschool model — providing individualized learning and the flexibility needed to serve small rural communities where traditional school models have become increasingly difficult to sustain.

Families are responding because they see something distinctive: an education that forms disciples of Jesus Christ, partners with parents, and prepares children to flourish academically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally. Dr. Shari McCarty, executive director/principal shared, "Through the creativity, faith, and dedication of our community, we have surpassed every enrollment and financial milestone — firmly establishing Bishop Baraga Academy as a shining example of faith-filled innovation and sustainable Catholic education."

The numbers tell a story far greater than growth alone. They reflect lives being changed, families being strengthened, and a model of Catholic education that is both deeply rooted in faith and built for the future.

Families from diverse faith backgrounds are drawn to the Academy for its Montessori and nature-based curriculum, and through that doorway, they too encounter the beauty of the Catholic faith. Parents share stories of children eagerly participating at Sunday Mass, praying confidently at home, and growing in their love for Jesus. What begins in the classroom is quietly becoming a source of renewal and evangelization throughout the community.

The success is more than encouraging statistics. It's evidence that God is blessing a mission that is changing lives.

In just two short years, Bishop Baraga Academy has experienced remarkable growth that far exceeds expectations for a new school.

Childcare enrollment has grown by

43%

from the first to the second year of operation.

Preschool enrollment has increased an extraordinary

80%

from the first to the second year of operation.

96.6%

of families returned, demonstrating exceptional confidence in the Academy's mission and quality.



A Legacy That Looks Ahead

From the very beginning, supporters recognized that building something extraordinary requires both meeting today's needs and preparing for tomorrow's opportunities.

That vision inspired Tom and Laura Madison to invest in future generations by establishing Bishop Baraga Academy's first endowment.

Tom and Laura understood that the greatest ministries are built not only for today, but for decades to come. They shared, "We believe deeply in the mission of Bishop Baraga Academy, and an endowment helps ensure that children and families will continue to encounter Christ through an exceptional Catholic education. We hope others will join us in building that future together."

To encourage others to help build that legacy, Tom and Laura have established a **\$25,000 matching opportunity** to grow the Academy's endowment through the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan and strengthen its future for generations to come.

An Invitation to Build the Future

Bishop Baraga Academy is still young, but it is already growing in remarkable ways. Classrooms are filling with children, parents are rediscovering their faith, and a community is being renewed.

The foundation is strong, but the opportunity is even greater.

With this matching opportunity, every gift made toward the Bishop Baraga Academy's endowment will be doubled, helping secure a lasting legacy of faith, hope, and Catholic education for generations to come.



Scan to double your impact.



The Gift of the Conversation

Sharing the Faith Behind Your Legacy

For many parents, creating an estate plan provides peace of mind. But one of the most meaningful parts of the process isn't signing the document; it's sitting down with your adult children to share why you've made the decisions you have.

St. Paul writes to Timothy,

"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you (2 TM 1:5 NRSV)."

Faith is passed from one generation to the next not only through words, but through the witness of lives rooted in Christ. Sharing the intentions behind your estate plan can be another way to bear that witness.

As Catholics, we believe everything we have is a gift from God, entrusted to us for a time. An estate plan reflects more than the distribution of assets — it tells the story of what has mattered most in our lives: our love for family, gratitude for God's blessings, and commitment to the Church and ministries that have shaped us. It may include the parish where we baptized our first child, celebrated sacraments, and found comfort in times of joy and sorrow, or the Catholic school where our children grew in their faith, formed lasting friendships, and joyfully took part in school life.



Ken Boerma with his grandkids

When your children understand the values, memories, and faith behind your decisions, they receive something far more enduring than an inheritance: they receive a window into your heart and a legacy of faith to guide future generations.

As Roger Boerma reflected after discussing his father, Ken's legacy plans:

"Dad never measured success by what he accumulated. He measured it by the lives he could impact. When he explained why he wanted to support St. Mary's Spring Lake Catholic School, it made perfect sense. The school shaped his faith, our family, and so many of our memories. Knowing the reasons behind his decision made us appreciate not just the gift itself, but the life of faith that inspired it."

By sharing your plans, your charitable giving is no longer something set apart from your family; it becomes a natural expression of the faith and generosity you lived out together.

As you begin the conversation, consider these questions:

- **Share your story.** What experiences strengthened your faith and inspired your generosity?
- **Explain your priorities.** Why have you chosen to care for your family while also remembering your parish or other Catholic ministries?
- **Invite conversation.** Encourage your children to ask questions so they understand not only what you've decided, but why.
- **Pass on your values.** Talk about generosity, stewardship, and trusting God's providence in every season of life.

Your legacy is more than the possessions you leave behind. It is the faith you have lived, the generosity you have modeled, and the invitation you extend for future generations to continue Christ's mission.



Planning Ahead for Year-End Giving

Turn Your Generosity Into Lasting Impact This Giving Season

As we reflect on the many blessings God has entrusted to us, the months ahead provide an opportunity to prayerfully consider how we are called to share those gifts. Thoughtful preparation allows you to approach the giving season with intention — aligning your generosity with your faith.

Here are three meaningful ways to prepare for the giving season ahead:



Give Thanks. Give Back.

Join us for Giving Tuesday with #GiveCatholicWM

This global day of giving on December 1 is an opportunity to support Catholic ministries close to your heart. Join us and the Diocese of Grand Rapids for #GiveCatholicWM, an opportunity to give to your favorite Catholic parish, school, or ministry.

For the sixth year, the Catholic Foundation is offering \$10,000 in challenge grants to inspire and multiply your generosity.



Share Your Blessings. Give Directly.

Make your gift through your IRA

If you are age 70½ or older, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) offers a tax-wise way to support the Church's mission.

Through a QCD, you can:

- Direct funds from your IRA to Catholic ministries and causes you care about
- Fulfill your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)
- Potentially reduce your taxable income

Because QCDs must be processed by December 31, starting early helps ensure your gift is completed on time.



Plan Now, Give With Purpose Later

Establish or contribute to your Donor Advised Fund

Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) are a flexible and increasingly popular way to practice intentional giving. By establishing or contributing to your DAF, you can thoughtfully support the ministries closest to your heart — now and in the years ahead.

With a DAF at the Catholic Foundation, you can:

- Make a charitable contribution and receive an immediate tax benefit
- Coordinate your giving in one place — from parish offertory and Catholic schools to local and national ministries
- Respond to needs as they arise while maintaining a spirit of generosity

By planning now, you can align your charitable giving with both your financial goals and your faith, making a lasting difference in the lives of others.

If you'd like to discuss giving options, we're here to help make the process simple and meaningful.



Wine & Wills

A Conversation on Catholic Life Planning

Planning for the end of life is one of the most loving and faith-filled gifts we can offer our families. Join us for an evening of fellowship, conversation, and guidance as we explore how thoughtful planning can be an expression of faith and a source of peace to you and your loved ones.

Whether you're just getting started or revisiting plans you've already made, these free events will help you approach end-of-life planning with peace, clarity, and hope.

Visit

catholicfoundationwmi.org/wine-wills

to learn more and register.

**Holy Trinity Parish
Comstock Park**

Thursday, October 22, 2026
4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

**St. Paul the Apostle Parish
Grand Rapids**

Thursday, November 5, 2026
6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

**St. Anthony Parish
Saranac**

Friday, November 13, 2026
12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

Circle of Life Luncheon



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Allow us to support your intent and impact.

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