



Our Catholic Voice

November 2024

Contact us: stcloudccw@gmail.com

Website: stcloudccw.org

We are the Voice of Catholic Women everywhere: from the Women in the Pews of the local parishes to the Deanery Councils, Diocesan Council, the Province of Saint Paul/Minneapolis, the National Council (nccw.org) and World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (wucwo.org) our International parent organization. This is one of the ways we share information up and down the lines of communication.

MISSION STATEMENT

The St. Cloud Diocesan Council of Catholic Women acts through its affiliate organizations to support, empower and educate all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership and service. DCCW programs respond with Gospel values to the needs of the Church and society in the modern world.



Saint Cloud Diocesan Council of Catholic Women

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We can feel the change in seasons as we see combines moving through the fields. The fall meeting for the DCCW has been set for October 16th. The location is the Church in New Munich.

I have also scheduled a Province board meeting in Paynesville. Both events are close to home. I definitely find it easier to schedule when I am familiar with the location and know some ladies that are willing to help.

As I took a break and am now continuing my report, the leaves are changing color. A song my children used to sing is going through my head. They would sing "Color the world with gladness, color the world with song." They referred to the bright colors of creation. Look at the trees and see how brilliant their colors are. The flowers left in the garden are more vibrant than ever. I feel the colors of creation are a welcome contrast to the colors of our political climate. I find myself in prayer for a brighter future, for a calm in the voices around me.

I am involved in a group (Options for Women) that offers help and support for women who are pregnant or think they might be. I feel that every time a young mother feels supported during a pregnancy, we are doing what Mary has shown us when she went to visit her pregnant cousin Elizabeth.

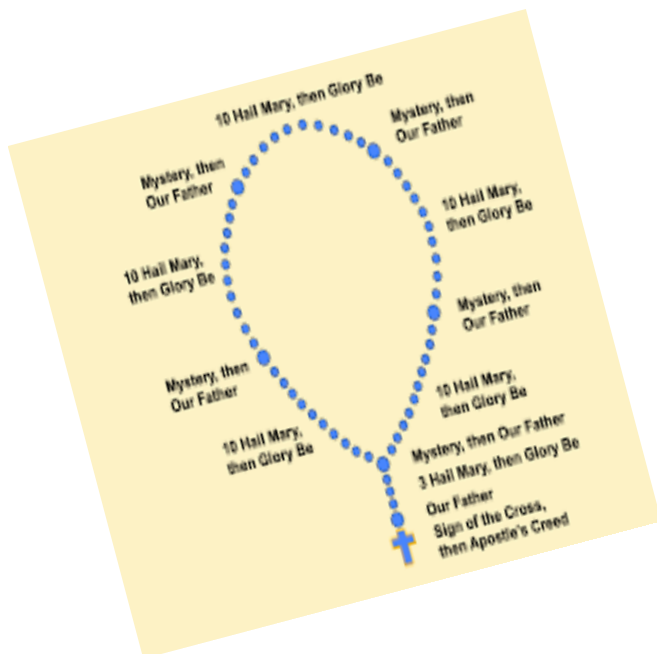
Now as to how all of this affects our sisters in the SCDCCW, everywhere we look there are women engaged in prayer groups, calls to join praying the rosary, or doing the Lord's work in their parishes.

I was invited to join a group in another parish to pray the rosary for the future of America. When we are gathered with a common goal, there is strength in the asking. When we go to church in time to join the rosary, even if we do not speak aloud what or who we are praying for, our voice counts. If we decide to pray at the exact same time as another group, are we louder?

On the weekend we visited with our 10-month-old grandson, he has already learned that when adults pray, he puts his little hands together and makes noise. How great is that?

Continue to join your voices with others and together we will make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

Lois Wesbur, President



FATHER VIRNIG THOUGHTS

Father shared some thoughts at the last board meeting

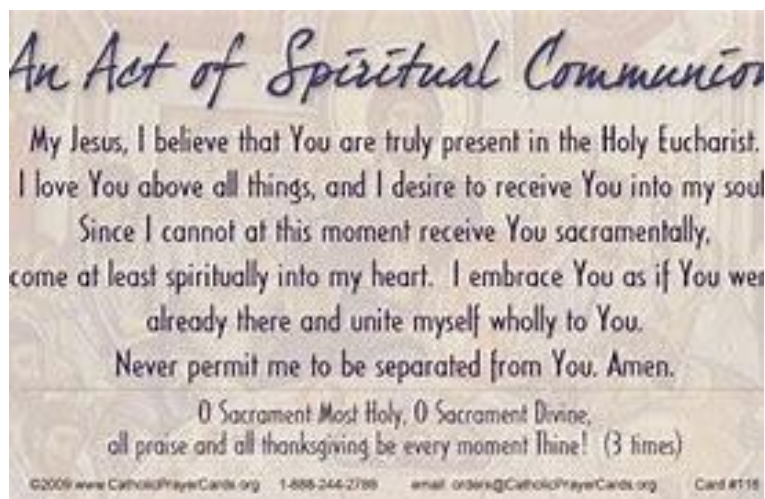
We hear about the number of Catholics that have disappeared from our pews. Fewer priests have to cover more parishes. If you know people who have stopped coming to mass, invite them to go along with you. Things can happen suddenly – death, illness, etc. The one thing we can share with others who are experiencing these things is FAITH. Always keep in mind – “Keep on the good side of Jesus”. Be ready always.

Here are just a few more:

- Thank him for another day.
- We know not the day or the hour.
- Ask; “Please take care of me.”
- Repeat each day; “All for the greater honor and glory of God.”

SPIRITUAL ADOPTION PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I love you so much, I beg you to spare the life of the unborn child, whom I have Spiritually adopted, who is in danger of abortion. *Say this prayer for 9 months.*



CHURCH COMMISSION

GREETINGS Sisters in Christ,

Wow, what a beautiful fall we are having, counting our blessings but ache for all those affected by the hurricanes, praying for them every day.

We had an awesome fall conference hosted by Saint Anthony's Christian Women in St. Cloud. The day went so fast, it was so nice to see and visit with so many women and yet I didn't have enough time to visit with all that I wanted too! Bishop Neary presided at Mass, gave a wonderful homily, describing the activities of the commissions and Deaneries, stating "See I do read your newsletter"!!

Our speaker was Frederick Blonigan, with our theme being "Come to the table of Plenty", he gave two excellent talks on the Mass. Some of his key points that either struck me or refreshed me about the Eucharist were:

- 1) There's enough Grace in one Consecrated Host to save the Whole World!
- 2) The devil snatches those who do not believe in the Eucharist.
- 3) Never be too casual receiving the Eucharist, use upmost reverence. (I'll add with Joy! When going up to receive Jesus at communion, be happy, joyful, smile, as this is the Source and Summit of our life. And besides, it makes people wonder what you've been up to, and they want the joy they see in you! Have a Reverent Joy because we have become a Tabernacle of God receiving the Eucharist!)
- 4) The amount of grace we receive from Mass depends on us. (Our disposition, attitude and prayer determine it. If we're fully engaged in the Sacrifice of the Mass, God will speak to us and graces will flow. It's easy to get distracted, but pay attention and take an active part in Mass. Mass is a sacrifice; at the offertory it states this is MY sacrifice and YOURS. Put your Heart on the altar and in the chalice and on the paten, participate with Christ so he can work through you/us. Sorry I added a lot of my thoughts, but I get so excited about the Mass! {Anything in () is my words}.

Changing the subject, Archbishop Fulton Sheen, once stated: "God writes his name on the soul of Every man." Wow now that's a statement to ponder on... He claims everyone! From the faithful to the hardened criminal and in between. Again, free will is given to us, and we decide what we will do, who we will follow. I guess this touched me because of the election campaign this year and to be honest there are times I'd like to strangle some people's neck. This puts me back in perspective, and I say "Jesus, I trust in you!" And pray more!

"No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must render an account." Hebrews 4:13.

As we prepare for Advent and Christmas, let us also prepare for an exciting upcoming year! Pope Francis has called December 24, 2024 through January 6, 2026 the Year of Jubilee 2025. The theme of the Jubilee is: "Pilgrims of Hope." Pope Francis hopes that the year will promote a sense of global brotherhood and sisterhood, care for the environment, and solidarity with the poor.

Jubilees happen every 25 years. They are a time of conversion and increase emphasis on God's mercy and forgiveness of sins, and reestablish a proper relationship with God, with one another, with all creation. It will be a year of hope for a world suffering the impacts of war, the ongoing effects of COVID-19 pandemic, and climate crisis.



The logo for the 2025 Jubilee features four figures embracing each other to represent the solidarity and brotherhood between peoples. The figure at the head holds onto the cross. (I also see the anchor under the cross, to me meaning staying anchored in Christ

Prayer

Father in heaven, may the faith you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of charity enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed hope for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.

May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

God Bless you in the remaining months of 2024. Stay close to Jesus through the Eucharist!

Jean Zwilling, Chair

COMMUNITY

October is a month that has many groups who observe and honor their special day. It is the month to be aware of Domestic Violence Awareness. Abuse takes many forms: emotional torment, verbal, sexual assault threats, and physical force or injury. Teen dating abuse is on the rise in middle school age students. Domestic Violence is behavior that is not inherited, it is a learned behavior.

“Help us to be instruments of your peace and to assist the victims of domestic abuse and their families with finding safety and hope for a better future, we pray to the Lord. For perpetrators of abuse in our homes, may they know God’s love and seek help for conversion and healing, we pray to the Lord. For those who witness domestic violence, especially children, they may understand that violence is never an expression of love, is never acceptable and must never be imitated, we pray to the Lord.”

(Permission granted from Fr. Chuck Dahm and the Domestic Violence Outreach program of the Archdiocese of Chicago to use the Prayers of the Faithful and other assorted information. NCCW Women Healing the Wounds educational brochure.)

October is Respect Life Month declared by the United Conference of Catholic Bishops. The information can be found at www.respectlife.org There is a novena that can be downloaded for the days off Oct 22-30 which enables all of us to participate in the prayers.

October is the month of the Holy Rosary with October 7th as the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. October is Breast Cancer awareness month. October 10th is World Mental Health Day. October is National Disability Awareness month too.

Oh, my goodness there are so many things to pray and think about.

Let us not forget that the Holy Rosary is the most special of all. I think of Our Lady as a Mother who can handle all the situations listed above. What better way to seek assistance than the Mother of God!?!



Polly Rabideau, Chair

ENVIRONMENTAL/RURAL REPORT

The growing season has come to an end in rural Minnesota. As I write this – most of the corn and soybeans have been harvested. I pulled the last of my green beans, tomato, broccoli, and cabbage. The kale may keep producing until the snow comes. It was a strange growing season with record rainfall and floods in the early summer and now drought throughout most of the state.

The State Fair had record attendance and the fall festivals are winding down. It is time to put the campers and outdoor furniture away and to start thinking of ice fishing, snowmobiling, and winter sports. There is always something to look forward to in each season of the year. (And also – some of us get away to warmer climates.)

Attached is an interesting article on funding of some of our natural resources in Minnesota:

[Building a Strong Outdoor Future—The Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund | CURE \(curemn.org\)](#)

Minnesotans love and care about the great outdoors. Year-round outdoor recreation is vital for happy, healthy communities and, luckily, Minnesota ranks among the best states in the nation for outdoor recreation investment. This is in part due to the investment Minnesotans make in our outdoor heritage. In 1988 (and twice since then), Minnesota voters approved a constitutional amendment to dedicate lottery proceeds for the protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of “the state’s air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources.” Thousands of projects and over \$1 billion dollars have been invested in communities across the entire state. The constitutional dedication of lottery proceeds to the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) is set to expire in 2025. [State legislators passed a bill in 2023](#) that put lottery dedication on the ballot as a constitutional amendment, renewing the fund through 2050.

In November 2024, Minnesota voters will have the chance to vote yes to reauthorizing the environmental fund. A yes vote on Amendment 1 will not only protect our natural areas, wildlife habitat, lakes, and rivers across Minnesota – it will continue to support the places we visit when camping, hiking, biking, fishing, hunting and spending time with family and friends. The Lottery funds the ENRTF which has grown to provide \$80 million per year in projects. These projects are “for the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state’s air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources.”

In the Minnesota River Basin, we have seen program dollars for youth engagement at [Prairie Wood’s Environmental Learning Center](#) (Spicer), ongoing support for the Pioneer Public Television program “[Prairie Sportsman](#)” which reports on various outdoor programs around the state, funding for [Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas](#) that protect and study native plant communities, rare species and geologic features across the state, research that supports water health, air quality, climate change, land and habitat restoration. These dollars have also funded groups like Ducks Unlimited to support ecosystem function and landscape resiliency projects that bring together partnerships to support waterfowl production. In southern Minnesota, ENRTF has funded well testing to protect drinking water from contaminants like arsenic and other impurities.

When returning the [Pomme de Terre river to its natural channel, funds were provided to move the native freshwater mussel population](#). West Central Research Outreach Center in Morris received fund to research [emerging solar system designs that maximize energy production and maximal benefits to farmers](#). Minnesota leads the country in addressing invasive species with ENRTF dollars supporting Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Cleaning Stations on public waters and AIS education.

Efforts are being made to make ENRTF grant dollars more accessible to smaller organizations and communities through a new community grants program. If this fund is renewed, this program will increase equity by ensuring BIOPOC-led organizations and smaller rural communities have greater access to address local environmental issues.



Joyce Simones, Chair

INTERNATIONAL

Let Us Bless More Lives by Filling a Box of Joy Shoebox

With your support Box of Joy brings hope to children in developing countries, this will provide them with a memorable Christmas gift and the much-needed reminder of God's love for them. The Christmas presents are distributed to the children by the Cross Catholic Outreach ministry partners in the **Dominican Republic**, El Salvador, Grenada, **Guatemala**, Haiti, Honduras, and Malawi. It is not possible for you to select the destination country for your Box of Joy gifts, but you can select the gender and age range of the children you want to bless.

All Boxes are filled with toys, clothing, school supplies, a rosary, and *The Story of Jesus* in the child's own language. Your donation demonstrates Christ's compassion to a child who may have never received a Christmas gift. This also gives you the opportunity to impact their hearts and provide them with the love and hope of Christ! For the children to receive the boxes at Christmas they need to be collected by early November. **OCTOBER** is the Month to fill your boxes and deliver them to the collection site. Working together, we can reach our goal of sending Box of Joy gifts to even more children during this Christmas season.

Our Northwestern and Eastern Deaneries have taken on this project with remarkable success and each year the number of boxes filled has increased. What a blessing it is for us to share in our abundance with these children and to share in the gift and fullness of Christ's love for us. We are blessed when we give, and they are blessed in receiving.

Since Cross Catholic Outreach launched the Box of Joy ministry in 2014, U.S. Catholic parishes, schools, groups, families, and individuals have united to bless children around the world with 646,163 Box of Joy gifts. The impact of these gifts over the past decade has been deeply felt in communities across Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Let us be Thankful for all that Christ has provided for us. Wishing each of you a Heartfelt Thanksgiving and a Blessed and Joyous Christmas.

Love and God's Peace,

Bonnie Jennen, Chair



LEGISLATIVE

The following information reflects the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC) on Poverty, where we can be most effective and provide our unique perspective where our faith communities can come together and have an impact.

- **Maternal Mortality and Morbidity...**
Low-income women and women of color are more likely to die during or within one year after childbirth for causes related to pregnancy or delivery. Minnesota has a committee that reviews all cases of maternal mortality to identify ways to improve care. The JRLC has discovered that in many cases, the investigators at the Department of Health do not have access to Medicaid data that would allow them this data. They will be leading an effort to make this important information available to the Department of Health. They will also be looking at actions to include data on maternal morbidity. That would also assist in providing quality care. Funding Early Intervention Treatment Facilities for People with Schizophrenia It is interesting to note that these facilities are more needed now since the legalization of marijuana last session, which can trigger people genetically, predisposed, to develop schizophrenia.
- **Payday Loan Rate Cap Applied to Online lenders in Minnesota.**
JRLC supports applying that cap to any lender who provides loans to Minnesota residents, not just NTN-based lenders.
- **Funding for additional In-patient Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Beds.**
There is a shortage of treatment beds in Minnesota and JRLC supports dedicated funding that would address staffing and resource shortages for in-patient mental health treatments.
- **Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing.**
Eighty % of Minnesota's 87 counties lack necessary shelter beds and the need continues to rise. JRLC supports additional funding to create additional emergency shelter. They also support dedicated funding for transitional housing to help families and individuals to move toward housing stability.
- **Sheltering a Portion of wages/income from Garnishment in Debt Collections.**
Several states support some portion of wages from garnishment when debt goes into collection. This protection enables people to meet their basic needs and maintains stability as they pay their debt instead of falling deeper into debt without these necessities.
- **Dedicated, Long-term Housing for people with severe Mental Illness.**
Many individuals who have severe mental illness are un-housed in Minnesota. Often, it is difficult for these individuals to find shelter or long-term housing due to their illness. Stable housing is an essential element in helping improve the prognosis and management of mental health conditions, and JRLC supports establishing dedicated, long-term housing for our neighbors with severe mental illness.
- **Addressing Gambling Expansion.**
As advocates for gambling expansion push to create easy access to sports betting, daily fantasy sports and other online gambling, JRLC supports limits on access to online gambling. and supports adequate support for those dealing with gambling addiction and for their families.

Mary Reuter, Chair

FAMILY CONCERNS

The meaning of the words we speak can be very effective in getting a message across to a listener. Even a casual conversation can have a significant impact.

I was in the basement of the St Anthony Parish of St Cloud recently. There was an aroma of coffee. I could hear the voices of many women chatting and laughing. I didn't really study any one woman in particular, but I knew there was good humor and faces leaning in to the giver of the conversations. Women have an ability to 'pick up' the meaning of body language and understand the thoughts behind the eyes so sincerely conveyed. (This is my opinion. But you understand – I don't need to explain).

I had been asked to create a display to exhibit on one of the many tables which surrounded the main gathering space. My display was a trifold. You know - those pressed large pieces of a synthetic material that are quite strong and do "stand up" to the task of putting information out to the casual strolling person. These strolling people generally have already enjoyed a nutritious warm soup, cold cuts and fruit. Oh! And an autumn dessert giving the beholder a promise of spice.

Regardless, I have to say: my trifold carried busy colors, photos, and invitations to pray for certain causes. As a matter of fact, I was satisfied with its final appearance – even though a couple of borders had to be repaired after opening. Yes. Elmer's Tape Runner – a handy little applicator dearly held close by scrapbook enthusiasts.

I decided that a burlap cloth printed with black checkered pattern would be on the table. A real find at this time of the year in Walmart. Coming through from a large retailer was delivered what I ordered: 200 pieces of Scrabble tiles. The Holy Spirit worked to convey this to me, because about a week prior, I had no idea as to what to show to represent Family Concerns.

Sprinkled about on the burlap covering were the tiles making up "family", "marriage", "love" (a sample). Most visitors to my trifold did examine the Scrabble words depicted on the board and on the table. A lot of them helped themselves to the Life Saver Peppermint candy rings while thinking about how to make a word. (Good idea, Holy Spirit, to include the 'life saver/ project saver').

A thoughtful woman paused and began to use the tiles to make the words: believe, don't leave. She and I sought out the "v" tiles together, because some of them were hiding in the assortment. She told me about Family, Parenting, Grieving Loss and wanting to separate from a partner. She looked at me seriously and told me sometimes it is an option to "go". And sometimes through examination, counseling and help there could be a solution. Couples might "Believe don't leave" their commitment, their family participation.

"The joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church" (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 1). Family life – though not without its challenges – is a great gift! It is in the family that all of us learn what it means to love and be loved, to forgive, and how to maintain relationships over time. *USCCB October website* [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops \(usccb.org\)](https://www.usccb.org)

Mary Jane Hay, Chair

PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT

Promoting events of any organization is more than simply jotting a quick note to the local newspaper or parish bulletin. Make sure you know the deadlines of the various publications you plan to advertise in. Be sure to include notices to “Community Calendar” at your local radio or television station and, of course, use Facebook or other social media. With all of the technology available to us today, there should be no reason someone isn’t aware of our great events.

Eye catching posters and flyers are also great tools that require thought, prayer and time. This past year, the St. Cloud Diocesan Council of Catholic Women designed ads for the Women’s Lenten Retreat, held Saturday, March 9, at St. Martin’s Parish, St. Martin; Fun, Food & Fund Day on Thursday, June 20, at St. Paul’s Parish in Sauk Centre; and lastly the Catholic Women’s Conference on Saturday, September 21, at St. Anthony’s Parish in St. Cloud.

Don’t forget – there’s always YOU! Word of mouth, an invitation extended to a friend or neighbor, are great forms of advertising. You can also help us spread the word by making sure your ACC secretary puts these notices in your bulletin. Feel free to make copies of the posters to place in your local library, grocery store, favorite diner, etc. Plans are already well under way for our 2025 Women’s Lenten Retreat to be held at St. Michael’s Parish in Buckman on Saturday, March 8. We hope to see you there!

Pat Kasella, PR Chair

INFORMATION TECHNICIAN

You can help by sending us the dates of your events. Send the what, when, and where with other information and we will include these on our **Calendar**. It’s helpful to all of us to see those so we can participate and get ideas from you for something we can do too. It will also prevent more than one event on any particular day.

Please stop by our website. (stcloudccw.org) We try to keep up to date with information and events. One page is filled with links to many other useful websites. Let us know if there is more information you’d like to see there.

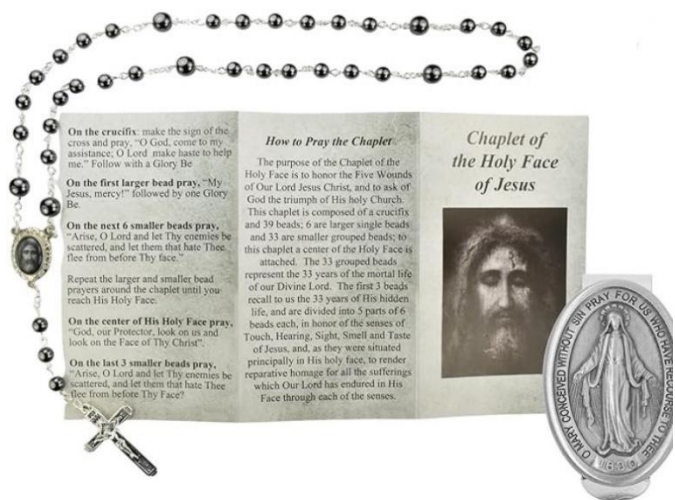
We have a Facebook page too. (Saint Cloud Diocesan Council of Catholic Women). There we share information from other councils and the Serra club.

Arleen Roelike, Information Technician

EASTERN DEANERY

Within the Deanery we are now finalizing plans for the Spring Lenten Retreat 2025:

- Date: March 8, 2025 Location: St. Michael's Church in Buckman
- Theme: "The Secret of the Holy Face"
- Reg Fee: \$20-\$25.
- Nita reported that they are still waiting for diocesan approval of the speaker. Fr. Carney, author the book "Secret of the Holy Face",
- Fr Carney has recommended Fr Altier as the afternoon speaker, and Cathy M Hill, as the morning speaker.



- Patty Commerford and others from Saint Michael's parish will be making Chaplets of the Holy Face of Jesus to be given to participants at the Retreat.
- Nita asked for ideas for table centerpieces that can be used for door prizes.
- More information will be shared in the January newsletter (Our Catholic Voice), the website (stclouddccw.org) and Central MN Catholic magazine.
- See Catholic Parents Online for information on the Holy Face. <https://catholicparents.org>.

Here's a great idea for a regular meeting!!

You are invited to a Christmas Party held at our December Deanery meeting, with Christmas music and festivities.

The theme is "A Birthday Party for Jesus."

Wear your Christmas colors or your favorite Holiday sweater!

The program, Mass, and luncheon is on **Saturday morning, December 7th** at **Saint Mary's, 625 3rd Ave., Milaca, MN** and is hosted by their women's group.

Get into the Christmas spirit. **MARK YOUR CALENDAR** and invite a friend!

Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

Nita Hayes, President

NORTH WESTERN DEANERY

What is your church doing to keep the youth active after they are on their own?

As I read over the bulletin of all the ACCs in this deanery. I was wondering what their main mission was. Here at Haven of Mercy it is to keep the teenagers involved after they are confirmed and leave school. We have a public school like most of our ACCs in the area. I know that after they graduated even if they attended our Catholic school, most of them are not active in our church community on a regular basis.

Yes, the ACCs have youth groups and all have religious instruction for the children going to public schools, but how do we get the parents to be involved with getting their children to Mass. Our groups help out financially to send the students on retreats that require them to receive the sacraments. Still many students after graduation from high school, even if they attended Catholic school, leave the church or seldom attend.

The Haven of Mercy is trying new things, the youth now have a coffee house, where they can meet for fellowship and games. We have a NET Ministries Team, which is a Catholic Youth missionary organization based in Saint Paul, MN. Our team consisted of 4 boys and 5 girls. They are housed in our parish houses.

The team will be with us until May and hopefully we can have another one next year. They are to attend activities with the students at the public school along with being at our Catholic school. This includes being there at lunch time and before and after school. They were at our Pro-life rosary with the students at Our Lady of Lourdes last night. There have been several open meetings with potluck lunches to meet the team.

IN our Haven of Mercy bulletin, we have one page dedicated to Faith Formation letting us know what is happening. This is only one way we are trying to keep the youth connected to their faith, hopefully we will see good results in this.

Linda Scephurek, President

Note: Watch for the Canonization of Carlo Acutis April 27, 2025. **Carlo Acutis** (3 May 1991 – 12 October 2006) was a British-born Italian [website designer](#) who documented [Eucharistic miracles](#) and approved [Marian apparitions](#). He catalogued both on a website he designed before his death from [leukaemia](#). Acutis was noted for his cheerfulness, computer skills, and devotion to the [Eucharist](#), which became a core theme of his life. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlo_Acutis.

Also see the nccw.org website for information about forming affiliates for high school and college girls. Dues are lower than for adult women, but it will give them a great opportunity to find information about programs and projects.

SOUTH WESTERN DEANERY

The next gathering for women of the South West Deanery with theme/ speaker is being planned. Thank you to parishes from these towns who have hosted previously: Morris, Glenwood, Elbow Lake, and Kensington. Meetings will continue to be rotated around our South West Deanery.

One item to discuss will be finding a Spiritual Advisor for our deanery.

Diocesan President Lois Wesbur had introduced at the last meeting the 'Box of Joy' program and perhaps our group or individual parishes may want to become involved.

South West deanery parishes were highlighted in the 'Source and Summit' Eucharistic tour on August 1, 2024. The first stop was St. Charles parish in Herman with 8:30 Mass and morning refreshments. Second was Ave Maria parish in Wheaton with adoration and prayers, followed by noon lunch. The last stop was St. Olaf parish in Elbow Lake with Benediction. All the priests were very welcoming and shared spiritual experiences and information. Thank you to Jean Zwilling from St. Paul's parish, Sauk Centre, for all the planning. Thank you to these parishes for opening their doors and hearts to all women of the St. Cloud Diocese.

Cheryl Weller, Secretary



METRO DEANERY

Although the Metro Deanery is not as organized as the others, we hosted the Diocesan Annual Fall Conference. The theme was “Come to the Table of Plenty.” It was held at Saint Anthony Parish in Saint Cloud and was well attended. The day started with registration, rolls fruit and beverages and fellowship.

A business meeting was held. Minutes from the 2023 annual meeting were presented. The audited financial statement for the fiscal year of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024 was presented. Elections were held: Sheri Streasick was elected Vice President (President-elect) and Carol Brunn was elected Treasurer. A resolution was presented and was passed by voice vote. (See separate page for more information).

Fred Blonigan was the speaker for the day. Fred retired in 2017 from Saint Agnes in Saint Paul, MN where he taught Theology. He served on the board of Catholic Parents Online. See: <https://catholicparents.org>.

His morning presentation featured Saint John Paul II and the Eucharist. Some points to reflect upon:

- There is no greater gift then to give oneself.
- Eucharist is the heart of the church, (St Robert Bellarmine)
- Body, Soul and Divinity, Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist
- Eucharist is; 1. sacrifice. 2. Communion, 3. Real presence

Mass was celebrated by Bishop Neary and concelebrated with Father Virnig. In his homily Bishop Neary mentioned reading “Our Catholic Voice”; even highlighting some of the articles. After Mass Sheri Streasick and Carol Brunn were formally installed as officers.

After a nourishing lunch, Mr Blonigan presented a study of the Mass. Again, some talking points:

- Consecration is the Center of the Mass
- Transubstantiation
- Apostle- one who is sent
- If you want to be a saint, pray to the Holy Spirit
- Angels are everywhere, especially around the altar with the saints
- Redeemed, not saved, Salvation is nor automatic
- Do more than you want to, (Saint John Bosco)
- Research Saint Manuel Gonzales Garcia, Bishop of the Abandoned Tabernacle (<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/st-manuel-gonzalez-garcia-bishop-of-the-abandoned-tabernacle>)

After closing prayers, door prizes were awarded and everyone was given water and a snack as a take-home treat.

WEST CENTRAL DEANERY

The West Central Deanery has been making some progress in procuring officers and commission chairs; however, we still do need to fill the positions of Vice President and President. Two women have accepted the Commission Chair positions of Church and Rural/Environmental Commissions, but there are 4 other Commissions for which we need chairs; those being: Community, Family, International and Legislative. We will also be asking for an historian, and a public relations chair. So, at this point we are still looking to fill those positions because we would like to again produce a Deanery Newsletter with their reports to keep all our parishes informed about pertinent information in their respective commissions.

The situation will be discussed again at the Fall General Meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 29th, 2024 at St. Louis, Paynesville. Also, at our General Meeting we will be explaining the West Central Deanery Rotation schedule, which our executive board prepared at a special meeting in August. The evening will begin with a Mass, light supper, meeting and report of the Eucharistic Congress, held this summer. And also included will be a Silent Auction, which is always interesting to see what items are placed for sale, and hopefully will be lucrative, as it is our only source of income.

Our next meetings will be in March for the Board meeting, and in April for the General Meeting. Hopefully the weather will cooperate for those meetings.

I want to thank the West Central Deanery parishes who have already graciously hosted our meetings since our “resurrection” – Albany, Melrose, Albany, St. Rose, Luxemburg, Richmond, Eden Valley, Holdingford (@ Upsala) and Jacob’s Prairie. They have all provided the site, refreshments and whatever the deanery has asked of them, - so “THANK YOU” to all of you wonderful ladies.

Praying and trusting in the Lord that He will guide us in finding the right women to come forward or accept the positions if asked.

Jean Hopper, President



RESOLUTION 2024

Supporting and Praying for Priests

Purpose:

To support, encourage and pray for priests.

Whereas, as stated by Pope John Paul II, "No priest, no Eucharist... no Eucharist, no priest" (*Gift and Mystery. On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination*), and priests are essential for maintaining the Church and the world's access to the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist; and

Whereas, Priests are called to heroic generosity, serving as "vicars of God's love" according to St. Ambrose (*The Complete Works of St. Ambrose*). Belonging to the world, not themselves, our prayers support them in this radical way of living and giving. As stated by Fulton Sheen (*The Priest is Not His Own*), "There is no 'on duty' for a priest...he is 'on love' everywhere..."; and

Whereas, The Church encourages us to pray for those in authority -- and priests and bishops hold places of authority in the Church, as "*Alter Christus*" (another Christ). In obedience to God's Word, our prayers encourage them in walking and living according to this supreme dignity; and

Be it Resolved, That DCCW foster a culture of respect for the priesthood. That members be mindful of the challenges faced by priests and bishops and offer them understanding and compassion, encouragement, and prayers of support and strength; and

Resolved, That DCCW members regularly pray for priests and bishops, individually and as a community, offering support for their various needs and roles as outlined above, utilizing programs such as Seven Sisters Apostolate (sevensistersapostolate.org).

(Note this resolution was submitted to NCCW by Barb Vezino, Detroit Province CCW Director and adopted by the NCCW. Adopted by St. Cloud DCCW September 21, 2024)

USCCB PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

Gracious and loving God, † we thank you for the gift of our priests.† Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments.† Help our priests to be strong in their vocation.† Set their souls on fire with love for your people.† Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel.† Allow them to experience joy in their ministry.† Help them to become instruments of your divine grace.† We ask this through Jesus Christ, † who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest.†

Amen.

MARY'S GARDEN

Washington's [Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception](#), the largest



Roman Catholic Church in North America, is an imposing structure with 70 different chapels. Visitors often need a few minutes of quiet contemplation after taking in the majesty of this building.

Affectionately referred to as *America's Catholic Church*, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception has been a century in the making.

Although its foundation stone was laid in 1920, this great shrine seems to have been conceived of as early as 1846, the year the Bishops of America declared the Blessed Virgin Mary the patroness of the United States under her title of the Immaculate Conception. That year, the Lowell Courier Journal, a newspaper in Massachusetts, wrote of "a magnificent Catholic Church to be built at Washington, D.C. after the manner of the great cathedrals of the Old World from subscriptions of every Catholic Parish in America."

Through the generosity of generations of American Catholics, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception stands as our nation's preeminent Marian shrine and patronal church, rivaling the great sanctuaries of Europe and the world, not only in size and stature, but also in beauty, dignity and sanctity.

Aware of this fact, in June 2000 the church added in Mary's Garden, an oasis often overlooked by the millions who visit the shrine each year.

MARY'S GARDEN is located on the grounds of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. It is part of the north terrace of the basilica and is situated on a three-quarter acre site. The garden was designed by landscape architect Brian Kane of the Kane Group in Alexandria, Virginia, and is utilized as an outdoor setting for hospitality, rest and prayer.¹



Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, dedicated the Garden on June 10, 2000. The garden is the gift of the National Council of Catholic Women, founded in 1920. Of their gift, the President of the National Council of Catholic Women said "This garden honors Mary, a faith-filled woman

who 'pondered things in her heart'...We hope that it will inspire all who come here to mirror Mary's life."³ At the entrance to the garden is a plaque welcoming visitors, which states the following: "You are invited to enter the garden for reflection and rest, meditation on the lives of faithful women modeled by Mary, and contemplation of God's creation."

The circular garden was designed by landscape architect Brian Kane and is located on the north terrace. At one end of the garden is a reflecting pool and a life-size limestone statue of the Virgin Mary. The bubbling Magnificat Fountain has a red granite border and is inscribed with words from the Bible: "My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit finds joy in God my savior."

ROSARY WALK AND GARDEN.

On September 23, 2017, a day of pilgrimage for more than 2,000 of the faithful during the centennial year commemorating the apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception dedicated its newest outdoor sanctuary of prayer and meditation: the Rosary Walk and Garden.



Located on the west grounds of the Basilica, across the street and adjacent to the National Shrine’s visitors parking area, this new prayer space features beautiful marble sculptures of Our Lady of Fatima, the three shepherd children, and Christ Crucified, along with the Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary depicted in mosaic art.

Bishop Frank Caggiano of the Diocese of Bridgeport was the principal celebrant of the Dedication Mass. In his homily, he poignantly asked all those gathered, “What is it you are looking for? What is it that you seek?” Urging that ultimately “we seek not something but someone,” Bishop Caggiano said, “Our Lady of Fatima came to show the world the answer: We are looking for your Son.”

“We have come here on this sacred day to remind ourselves that the message of Fatima is as important now as it ever has been,” Bishop Caggiano said, referring to Our Lady’s appearances in Portugal a century ago, now commemorated in the new Rosary Walk and Garden.

“This Rosary Walk and Garden is a beautiful expression of our Catholic faith and devotion to the Great Mother of God,” Bishop Caggiano exclaimed. “May it stand for generations to come as a sign of hope and sacred reminder for all who are searching that the answer is Christ!”

Monsignor Walter Rossi, Rector of the National Shrine, expressed his sincere gratitude to all those whose efforts made the Rosary Walk and Garden a reality. He especially thanked Bishop Caggiano and Dr. Daisy Lin for their great devotion to Our Lady and for their vision and collaboration that brought the project to fruition. He also thanked Vincent and Theresa Viola, Sebastian Antonio, Betty Rosas-Chua, Aida Coliangco, and the John Quinn Foundation whose generous support made the Rosary Walk and Garden possible.

To view the Mass and Dedication of the Rosary Walk and Garden, [please visit the National Shrine’s YouTube Channel.](#)

VANDALISM

In an incident that police are treating as a possible hate crime, a statue of the Blessed Mother in a prayer garden near the prominent Washington, D.C., basilica was damaged by an as-yet-unidentified assailant Thursday.

The statue, located on the grounds of the [Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception](#), appeared to have been struck in the face with a hammer. Light fixtures along a walkway in the garden were also shattered.

The statue is located in Mary’s Garden, which according to the National Shrine’s [website](#) is shaped in a circle to symbolize eternity. The life-size statue called “Mary, Protector of the Faith” by Jon-Joseph Russo portrays the Blessed Mother lovingly cradling the infant Jesus. The garden and statue were dedicated in 2000.

Go to the [NCCW.org](#) to donate.

CALENDAR

March 8, 2025 Annual Lenten RETREAT. St. Michael's Church in Buckman

Theme: "The Secret of the Holy Face"

April 8, 2025 WC Board Meeting, Saint Benedict, Avon

May 1, 2025 West Central Deanery Spring General Meeting, Holy Saints ACC

June 26, 2025 Fun Food and Fund Day Location: St. James Parish, Randall,

Theme: "Hope Plants the Garden; Faith Makes it Grow"

September 20, 2025 Fall Conference 2025: West Central Deanery

Location and theme TBD