

Mary  
Mother of the Church Area Catholic Community

September 2021



This beautiful painting of "Our Lady of Guadalupe" was painted by a very talented 10th grader from Bertha. The painting is on canvas and is 9 feet tall. The next time you visit St. Joseph, Bertha head down the stairs and take a peek at it.

# Mary

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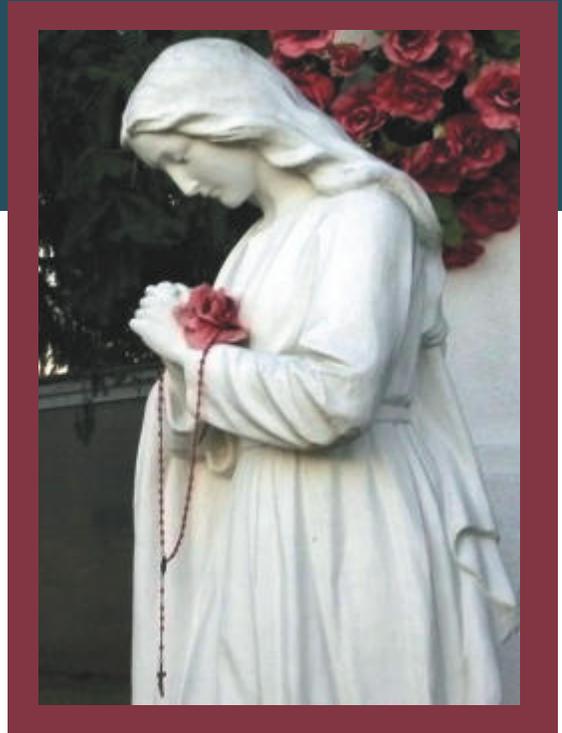
## Information

Welcome Deacon Randy Altstadt to our Community of Mary as our new Business Administrator! All eight parishes will be under his business supervision as Chief Financial Officer and general manager, allowing the priests to be involved in more pastoral works, and providing our staff, councils and committees a resource of expertise and wisdom in day-to-day operations. He begins this new adventure with us September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Deacon Randy previously served as a parish administrator, grocery store owner and manager, sales representative, and meat cutter in central Minnesota. Along the way, he grew in his love of the Catholic faith and went to St. John's University to become a deacon. His work in parish administration in the Perham area over the past eight years has helped their Catholic parishes adapt to growing demographics, overcome economic challenges, and meet pastoral needs. I am looking forward to working with him, and I hope you find him to be as great a leader as I have.

"Let's ask Deacon Randy." You will probably hear this response from the priests a lot in the future, as we want him to carry the responsibility of daily operations in our parishes. If you see something that needs to be fixed, tell Deacon Randy. If you have a question about finances, maintenance, operations, where to find something, or what the plan is for a particular parish, ask Deacon Randy.

'Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,  
that we may be made worthy  
of the promises of Christ.'



Of course, the pastor (Father Aaron), business administrator (Deacon Randy), principal (William Liedl), office administrators (Barb Piecek, Wadena and Mary Murray, Staples), and other staff will be in regular conversations with one another. Father Gabriel will be working as much with our Discipleship staff and programs and Sacred Heart Area School as possible, so that our younger people are taken care of. I will be working on overall leadership, building up Catholic culture in our Community of Mary, development of our spiritual lives together, and everything else.

Let us continue to serve one another and support the mission of our parishes and Area Catholic Community of Mary, Mother of the Church to "make disciples" by being witnesses of a living faith in Jesus Christ. Each of us has a role to play in God's plan.

+ Fr. Aaron Kuhn



## PEACEFUL ~ PRAYERFUL ~ BEAUTIFUL

St. Hubert in Blue Grass, has an Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto at the Parish. It is modeled after the one in Massabielle, France. Located right north of the church, it was built in 1931 and is the largest grotto in the Diocese of St. Cloud.

The current pastor at the time, Crosier priest Father John Van Den Boer, was the inspiration for this grotto. Years of missionary work in India and Java had affected his health, and doctors prescribed outside manual labor for his recovery. Father also had some previous experience building grottoes; one in his native country, Holland, and had assisted with others in this country.

While Father was busy preparing a model of the Lourdes Grotto from memory, parishioners were in their fields in search of rocks of all shapes and sizes, which they hauled to the churchyard. The most unique; a bell-shaped rock, a corkscrew-shaped rock, a rock with a cross carved in it were used on the front and in the rock garden. The simpler rocks were destined to be inside the structure. All the rocks were cleaned with muriatic acid and oiled.

While Father's plan was to build a small structure to save on expense, a passerby who owned a lumber yard in Park Rapids said it wouldn't last long without a

good foundation. This generous man donated the cement so the grotto could be built properly.

The grotto construction began in May 1931 and was completed in September with the help and ingenuity of parishioners using a tripod and ladders. The final physical dimensions of the grotto are 35 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 19 feet high with a 6-foot foundation. The original statue of the Blessed Virgin was hand-carved of terra cotta and was imported from Germany. Original landscaping around the grotto included flowers, small rock compartments with benches in them, a fountain, and a lily pond with goldfish. The kids in catechism class caught the goldfish each fall so they could be stored in the basement of the rectory during the winter. Electric lights were installed in the niche behind Our Lady.

In the spring of 2012, the original statue was removed and taken to Mary Ann Uselman for repair and repainting. She found the statue was deteriorated beyond repair. The search for a new statue started and fund-raising began to replace it.

Summer travelers, who traveled Wadena County Hwy. 23, passed by the grotto and noticed the missing statue. Disturbed calls came to the parish office,

"Mary is missing!" They wanted to know if there was a problem and if they could help. These were some of the first donations received to replace Our Lady's statue. Sufficient funds were raised, we were able to purchase a statue of St. Bernadette also and complete the grotto setting. Statues were found and ordered, through Hurley's in Fargo.

The new statues arrived in Blue Grass two days after Pope Benedict declared "The Year of Faith" in 2012. Father Arlie Sowada blessed them.

The statues were coated with a weather protective material and more grotto restoration and lighting repair was done by Chuck Winkels and Dan Platt. Three generations of the Kern family and other parishioners helped put Mary back into the grotto. St. Bernadette followed in July 2013. Landscaping the area was completed with more "special" rocks and flower beds which are cared for by Mary Beth Brockpahler and her family. The area got a final touch in 2017 when two benches, made of weather-proof composite materials, were placed on a concrete base and placed so they faced the grotto.

The whole area is a favorite space for prayer, meditation, and photos.

# Vacation Bible School "Cat Chat"



We enjoyed a week going on a "Wilderness Adventure" and taking the "hike of our lives" while we explored the sacraments at St. John the Baptist in Bluffton. We sang, crafted, ate yummy snacks, and played games. Each day had a patron Saint (or 2) that guided us and taught us about a particular Sacrament. Two of the saints could even bilocate! St. Martin taught us that "all work is holy." Thank you to the amazing adult and teen helpers for the week! What a gift!





## Vacation Bible School “Holy Mysteries”

Vacation Bible School was held at St. Joseph's parish in Bertha the first week of August. 48 children Kindergarten through 6th grade spent the mornings learning about our Catholic faith, creating a variety of crafts, participating in outside activities, making new friends and ending our time enjoying lunch. We were blessed with several adult volunteers and 20 teen helpers that spent the week making sure everything ran smoothly. A team effort made for a successful week of ministering to the youth of Mary's ACC as well as some visitors from around our area. Big thanks to all who participated and volunteered!



# SAFER WITH HIM

“Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was calm. But He said to them, “Where is your faith?” And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, “Who can this be?” For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him.”

Adapted from Luke 8: 24 – 25

Storms are quite common on the Sea of Galilee. Although the lake stretches only five miles wide and thirteen miles long, its perils are infamous. The reason? Its unique geography.

The lake lies at an incredible distance below sea level and stares up at mountains creased with deep ravines. The ravines serve as gigantic funnels that bring winds whirling down upon the lake without notice. A thermal buildup in the extremely low valley sucks cold air violently downward, often strengthening these gales.

One of those very violent storms engulfed the disciples one day after Jesus told them, “Let us cross over to the other side of the lake” [Luke 8: 22]. Soon after they launched, Jesus fell asleep. A windstorm quickly swept down on the lake and began to swamp their boat. The panicky disciples shook Jesus awake and shouted, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” [verse 24].

It is interesting to note that although the fury of the storm did not awaken the Lord, the frightened cries of His disciples did. In one sense, Jesus had fallen fast asleep, but in another sense, He had not. For God does not “sleep on the job.” He is ever vigilant, watching over His beloved children. “Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep,” says the psalmist [Psalm 121: 4]

Once awakened, Jesus stood and rebuked the wind and the raging waters. “Peace, Be Still!” He commanded [Mark 4:39].

That’s a pretty unusual way to deal with a storm, don’t you think?

But the fact is, Jesus recognized that this particular storm came from the devil himself. So, Jesus was rebuking the one behind the storm.

A better translation of Jesus’ phrase “Be still” would be “Be muzzled!”

Like a wild animal, Satan was trying to stop Jesus and the disciples from reaching the other side and continuing His ministry.

So, the Lord muzzled the devil, and he failed.

As the lake’s water grew calm and placid, Jesus turned to His quaking men and said, “Where is your faith?” Immediately their fear of the storm morphed into fear of Him. “Who can this be?” they asked one another, amazed. “For He commands and even the winds and water, and they obey Him!” [Luke 8:25]

Can you identify with the disciples’ alarm? Are you being pummeled by a storm right now? You thought you were headed in the right direction, when, without warning, a tempest hit. Your boat began filling with water, and you wondered, “Is Jesus sleeping?” “I’m going to drown!”



*Thank you Jesus,  
for loving me and  
calming my storms.*

I have had the privilege of serving the Board of Directors of the Augustinian Missionary of the Convent that I once served, and we had a featured speaker Bible teacher Warren Wiersbe in our team retreat and spoke about the three types of storms that may blow into our lives: correcting storms, protecting storms, and perfecting storms.

### **CORRECTING STORMS**

Jonah faced this kind of storm when he disobeyed God and tried to run from the task God has assigned to him. A great storm overtook his ship. Through that storm the Lord took hold of his reluctant prophet and put him back on course [see the Book of Jonah].

A correcting storm is entirely the result of disobedience to God and His call. Maybe you steal something and you get caught. Maybe you are caught in a lie or found cheating on a test.

When God allows you to reap the consequences of your actions, that is a correcting storm.

The question is whether you will learn from your mistakes and change your behavior. When Jonah finally admitted his folly and repented, the storm stopped. Sometimes, however, we make the storm worse by our failure to respond properly. Liars and cheats may continue in their course. In that case, they have learned nothing, and the storm will surely grow worse.

### **PROTECTING STORMS**

Some storms are designed to protect us from something far worse.

When God instructed Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love," and sacrifice him atop Mount Moriah. He sent the patriarch into a howling storm. Why did God command such a thing? The Bible tells us it was a test to see if Abraham would place his love for his son on a higher plane than his love for the Lord [see Genesis 22:1-14]

In other words, the great man of faith ran the risk of making his son an idol. When it was all said and done, Abraham passed the test beautifully, and God prevented him from taking his son's life. So the storm ended, and Abraham's faith and love for the Lord grew even stronger.

Protecting storms may cause us a great deal of alarm and discomfort, but they shield us from something far worse.



### **PERFECTING STORMS**

Joseph endured this kind of storm. God used hardship and disappointment to turn a promising young boy into a seasoned man of God. While we never get the sense that Joseph enjoyed the storms, we know that he appreciated what they accomplished, for he could say to those who mistreated him, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good." [Genesis 50:20]

God used the storm on the Sea of Galilee to both protect and perfect Jesus' disciples. They really had no reason to panic. After all, Jesus had said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." Had He said, "Let's go drown together," they would have had reason to worry. Jesus did not promise a smooth voyage, but He did say they would make it. And Jesus Himself was on board!

When will we learn that we are safer with Jesus on a stormy sea than we are without Him even on the most placid lake?

Better to be with Jesus, in any circumstances, than to be anywhere else without Him.

Submitted by: Carmen Pederson

*Lord Jesus,*

You are a shield around me, strong in love, heavy with power.

Shaped with hope and gilded with truth, I will fear no evil, for you watch over me.

You defend and deliver me.

In this day, this hour, this moment I put my trust in you.

# “TOTALLY YOURS”



Totus Tuus, a Latin phrase meaning “totally yours,” was the motto of St. John Paul II. Taken from St. Louis de Montfort’s *True Devotion to Mary*, it signifies our desire to give ourselves entirely to Jesus Christ through the hands of our Blessed Mother Mary. It also expresses our effort to give all that we have to every young person we encounter.



Totus Tuus is the title of the weeklong summer program offered and coordinated through the Vocations Office of the St. Cloud Diocese. For us it was a great way to officially begin our Area Catholic Community coming together since it was also the week of our transition to many of the new changes in our Area Catholic Community. Totus Tuus was held for the Elementary students June 28-July 2 and for the middle and high school students from June 27-July 1. We had over 40 kids in the day program at St. Ann’s from throughout our ACC and about 15 teens participate in the teen program at Staples, with many of them also helping with the day program. It was fun to welcome back Seminarian, Scott Kahler, who lived with Fr. Aaron for awhile during the Covid shut down last year.

“Adoration was very moving to be praising God with so many other people our age” - Macey

“Steubenville had a way of opening people’s hearts to the Lord’s mercy and goodness. Seeing hundreds of other young Catholics working towards holiness and Heaven is so reassuring and inspiring! I will definitely be going back next year to experience Jesus in the uniquely intimate way that Steubenville allows for” -Ella

“It was an unreal experience that brought me a lot closer to the Lord and strengthened my faith” -Eva

“During adoration you could feel the Holy Spirit moving through the crowd and changing lives! It was amazing” -Kayla

“It was a very fun and an amazing experience” -Seth

“Steubenville was such an amazing experience! I became closer to Jesus, I never thought that was possible, and he placed a new flame in my heart for Him. I had the opportunity to lector in front of the whole conference with Ella, which was a one in a million chance, something only the Lord could make happen. Definitely would recommend for those wanting to grow in Christ!” -Madison

## STEUBENVILLE CONFERENCE “2021”



Mary, Mother of the Church Area Catholic Community brought 24 teens, 7 Chaperones, and Fr. Gabriel Walz. We shared a bus with Fr. Tom Skaja from Perham and served at Feed My Starving Children and celebrated Mass together on the way to the conference in Rochester and on our way home spent time reflecting in Cold Spring at the Grasshopper Chapel and St. Boniface.



“I had such an amazing experience! I recommend it to everyone no matter how deep you are in your faith. It was really a life changing, for sure my favorite part of this summer! The music is phenomenal and the adoration is so so so amazing!” - Sarah

“Such a good experience! 10/10 would recommend” -Lilly

“I had the best Catholic experience of my entire life. Adoration was the most powerful and overcoming moment of the whole conference. I encourage anyone to go if you’re on the fence about it” -Rachel

“5/5 Stars! It was really fun and peaceful. Try to come with a big group.”

“It was an awesome experience to worship the Lord with thousands of other people my age”

“Fr. Tom challenged us to not ‘shove the dove.’ I took his words and followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It broke me and restored my heart to its truest beauty! I challenge you to take a leap of faith and listen to the call of the Dove” -Breh Hopp

“It was very fun. I wish it was four days” -Colby

“It was really fun and I felt really close to God” -Connor

# HOPE HIDDEN IN THE REDWOOD FOREST



On a cycling trip down the Pacific coast I had the opportunity to hike in the redwood national forest. Standing at the base of a massive redwood tree and looking up at its endless trunk gives an amazing perspective of God. A big God who values the smallest of details and creates a ginormous tree from a tiny seed!

I roamed through the trails mesmerized by the beauty of the redwoods. The damp and dark forest seemed appropriate for the way my heart was feeling. There I was halfway through the trip down the coast and my heart was already disappointed. I started my trip with the expectation of finding where I fit in this world. I knew God wanted to use my passion for cycling to bring others to know him, but I felt out of place even among cyclists. The answer was clear: “nope, not here either.”

The year before, I went through the challenging process of surrendering all to trust God. I had given up my dreams as a serious racer. Rather than planning my training schedule, seeking God became my priority each day. I desire to be in his presence and studying the Bible. I was trusting in his promise found in Psalm 37:23 (NIV), “The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him.” Still, I question how God could use me for his purposes when I found myself alone in every situation.

I wondered if God had forgotten about me. After all, I was a tiny human hidden under the canopy of the giant redwoods. Lost in my thoughts, I wandered deeper into the forest. As darkness surrounded me, I was surprised to see light shining on the ground ahead. Suddenly, I knew to keep moving forward on this path.

As I got closer, I realized it was a beam of sunlight peeking through the tree branches. Standing under that patch of light, I thought the warmth of a ray of hope. A sign from God that he sees me and is guiding me on this journey. A comfort for my disappointing heart, that if I kept seeking him and faith persevering and faith, he would keep me on his solid path. I need to wait patiently as he prepares me to be visible and valuable to a world in need.

What started as a short hike turned into a journey of finding hope deep in the redwood forest as a ray of sunlight encourage me to continue on the path toward the future he has planned. Like me, you may sometimes feel alone in the darkness, but God is always with us on our unique journey of faith. When we trust him to direct our lives, he will send raise of hope to encourage us to persevere. He is a big God who cares about the tiniest of details, and in his timing he will reveal the next steps to his perfect plan!

Written by: Angie Johnson as she was biking the Pacific Coast MS tram ride in 2019.  
Angie is the granddaughter of Rose Johnson.

# CONFIRMATION RETREAT 2021



On August 12<sup>th</sup>, 67 students from across our ACC gathered for their confirmation retreat at Assumption of Our Lady Catholic Church in Menahga, MN. They were accompanied by 6 priests, 1 deacon, 2 sisters, 3 staff members, and over 20 volunteers to help make the day run smoothly and allow them to grow deeper in their faith for God and the Catholic faith. Each was assigned to small groups where they got to know one another better and then were able to share, learn, question, and understand different parts of Confirmation, their faith, the Holy Spirit, and what it truly means to be a Catholic Christian. Throughout the day they listened to different talks from volunteers, sisters, and priests, played games outside, ate delicious food, spent time in prayer during Adoration, were able to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, asked priests, sisters, and a deacon questions during a vocations panel, and ended the day celebrating Mass together. The Holy Spirit was working hard that day in the lives of each confirmation student. Some commented that they had no idea there were this many Catholics their age, some had never actually met a Sister or heard about their vocation before, and some mentioned that they didn't quite understand Confirmation until that day.



Mary  
Mother of the Church Area Catholic Community

ST. JOSEPH  
BERTHA

ST. HUBERT  
BLUEGRASS

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
BLUFFTON

ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY  
MENAHA

ST. MICHAEL  
MOTLEY

SACRED HEART  
STAPLES

ST. FREDERICK  
VERNDALE

ST. ANN  
WADENA

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THANK YOU MARY ROHR FOR SUBMITTING YOUR BEAUTIFUL MARY GARDEN!



## The Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you;  
blessed are you among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners  
now and at the hour of our death.  
Amen.