Seven educators at Catholic schools in the Diocese of Pittsburgh have received the 2021 Golden Apple Award:

- JoLynn Clouse- principal, Saint Wendelin School
- Darci Smith- teacher, Archangel Gabriel Catholic School
- Robert Childs- associate principal, Serra Catholic High School
- Meloni DiPietro-Gunthoerl- teacher, Seton LaSalle High School
- Emily Janocha- teacher, John F. Kennedy Catholic School
- Mallory Gurney- teacher, Blessed Francis Seelos Academy
- Lisa Radzanowski- teacher, Ave Maria Academy

The award recognizes their excellent performance in the classroom, church and community. Each educator will receive a monetary prize, thanks to the generosity of the Donahue Family Foundation.

Each week, The Pittsburgh Catholic will feature one of the Golden Apple honorees.
Golden Apple Award Winner: JoLynn Clouse

School/position: Saint Wendelin, principal

Quote: “It takes a whole village to make this school.”

When JoLynn Clouse became principal of the oldest Catholic school still in operation in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, it was in danger of closing.

Saint Wendelin School in Carbon Center, Butler County, founded in 1845, staged a comeback, in large part due to the new principal’s drive, dedication and leadership.

Clouse's commitment, collaboration and love for her job have been recognized with the 2021 Golden Apple Award. She expressed surprise and appreciation at the honor.

“I was not prepared for this news,” she said. “It’s humbling, and also validation that our school is thriving. It takes a whole village to make this school. I've just been a piece of that.”

After beginning her career in public schools, Clouse arrived at Saint Wendelin School in 2003, first teaching preschool, then second grade. When she was promoted to principal in 2011, there were only 58 students in grades K-8. She rallied teachers, parents, alumni and the community to support the school, launched fundraising and marketing campaigns, and helped double K-8 enrollment.

“I have found her to be an outstanding leader,” Father Matt McClain, pastor of Saint Clare Parish, wrote in a nominating letter. “She holds the teachers, students, and parents to a high standard…of work, excellence, dedication and transparency that she herself exceeds. That is why they so readily follow her.”

Sixth grade student Issiac Waller described his principal as “a born teacher and leader” who “encourages all students to do their best.

“I am blessed to have her see me through my early education years,” he wrote in his nominating letter.
Clouse earned a BA in elementary education from Slippery Rock University and a master's in administration and supervision PK-12 from Duquesne University.

She is also active in her parish and community, volunteering at the Good Friday Fish Dinner, church picnic and Saint Vincent de Paul food drive.

*Photo by Jim Judkis*
Alpha transforms

JULY 16, 2021

Categories: News
Tags: Diocesan News, Featured

https://youtube.com/watch?v=hNZHVjifKlc
This fall more than 2,000 Catholics across the diocese will have undergone a spiritual awakening experience that is harnessing the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives.

Alpha is an 11-week series being offered in a growing number of parishes. Each session includes a meal, video presentation and small group discussion that helps people examine their faith, ask questions and share viewpoints—no matter where they are on their spiritual journey.

“We’ve found that people are hungry for an experience of God, not an explanation,” said Alpha coordinator Sue Ferguson, who helps train facilitators at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Glenshaw and Allison Park. “We begin by building a relationship with Christ.”

Ferguson made the comments during an interview with Father Tom Burke on Catholic Education Plus, airing Sunday, July 18 at 6:30 a.m. on KDKA Radio, and which will be available later online: https://www.audacy.com/kdkaradio/podcasts/catholic-education-plus-20662.

Young adults really have connected with Alpha, said Rosemary Cather Kelly, Ferguson’s collaborator who also was interviewed. “The first group wanted to keep going when the sessions ended,” Kelly said. “They continued to meet for prayer, study and fellowship, and many groups are still meeting, years later.

“We’re seeing people come alive in their faith, returning to church. It’s the Holy Spirit working,” she said.

“By providing a meal and conversation, investing in their lives, people become more open to the message in the videos,” Ferguson said. “They feel like they’re being listened to. It builds trust, and opens the door to their heart.”

When the pandemic hit, Alpha moved online, and it turned out to be a blessing for any number of reasons. Organizers were able to reach people who might not attend in person, either due to schedules or travel.

“We will continue to offer Alpha Online at least once a year,” Ferguson said. “It can be effective if you do it right.”

Our Lady of Perpetual Help is an Alpha “hub parish,” training facilitators from other parishes on how to plan and deliver the program. To learn more, visit https://www.olphpgh.org/alpha
Young adults from Alpha come together after Mass and Eucharistic adoration. (Pittsburgh Catholic file photo)
hit the road, pals

july 16, 2021

categories: columns
tags: bridging the gap, featured

bridging the gap

bishop david a. zubik

have you ever met a prophet? seriously. have you ever met a prophet?

before you think about your answer, permit me to clarify a common misunderstanding on what a prophet is.

oftentimes folks will describe a prophet as someone who can predict the future. while that might be the secular definition, it clearly is not the biblical one.

every one of the prophets in the old testament and in the new are intended to be “the mouthpiece of god.” god calls prophets to go make a difference in people's lives.

and so i go back to my earlier question: have you ever met a prophet?

sister esperentia was my eighth-grade teacher as well as the principal at the former saint stanislaus elementary school in my hometown of ambridge. sister was also the moderator of the altar servers, teaching us both the “how to” and especially the “why” of being servers. sister inspired us in no uncertain terms how to serve—out of love for our dear jesus.

as i look back to eighth grade, it is clear that sister was a “prophet” in my life. she was a mouthpiece for god. she clearly made a difference in my life.

on more than one occasion during my last year in elementary school, sister esperentia expressed her firm conviction that i was going to be a priest. to be honest, while i respected sister esperentia, i thought that on
that particular issue she was “three bricks shy of a load.” I was absolutely sure, definitely so, that there was no way I would ever become a priest. Like most fourteen-year-olds, I thought I knew all the answers to every question, especially about my life. I knew for certain—there was no way I would be, could be a priest. No way!

So—have you ever met a prophet? My guess is that you have. As fellow sojourners on the way to God’s kingdom in heaven, all of us have met a prophet. Someone has been for us “the mouthpiece of God,” someone who made a huge difference in our lives.

- Perhaps it was the person who introduced you to the woman or man who has become your spouse.
- Perhaps it was someone who inspired you to pursue the profession that is now yours.
- Perhaps it was someone who put you “back on track” whenever you went “off the rails.”
- Perhaps it was someone who by their very being was an inspiration to you.

Over the course of the last two years, there has been a remarkable video series entitled “The Chosen” available online. If you aren’t aware of the series, I encourage you to get on board. If you have viewed either or both seasons, you know that it is a beautiful and thought-provoking depiction of Jesus choosing those who would be His followers. In a very human way, the series helps its viewers to not only come to know Jesus better, but also come to know His Mother better; Mary Magdalene better; and the twelve Apostles better.

When you and I crack open the New Testament and read about Jesus in any of the four Gospels, we catch in print what “The Chosen” captures on video—Jesus calling people to be “the mouthpiece of God.” We experience His call to make a difference in the lives of others. As His followers come to know Jesus, He sends them out—“Hit the road, pals”—to help even more people come into a relationship with Him.

As I continue to relish opportunities to reflect on the words and the deeds and the power of Jesus’ presence in the Gospels, as I meditate upon the impact of His life on mine and yours, it becomes pretty clear that prophets were not only commissioned in the past. God continues to call prophets today. And one of the prophets that Jesus calls is in fact the image that you and I see in our respective mirrors.

Whether in our places of work or in our family rooms; whether backed up in traffic or waiting in line in the local supermarket; you and I are called to be mouthpieces of God, people who make a difference in other people’s lives. “Hit the road, pals.”

It is pretty clear that life in the 21st century can be even more rugged than the dirt paths that Jesus’ first disciples trod. The conventional wisdom of our day leads the world’s inhabitants to be a selfish lot, whose *modus operandi* is what Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI calls “relativism.” We are tempted to see ourselves as the center of the world, owing nothing to anyone else and guided by no principle beyond our own desires.

Each day, we encounter people who need us to make a difference in their lives. And just as Sister Esperentia did that for me and another prophet did that for you—you and I can make a difference in others’ lives. Lo and behold, Sister Esperentia’s conviction of my future came to pass—Yours Truly became a priest. I’m convinced you can say the same about a prophet who has made a difference in your life. Now it’s our turn.

I began this reflection with asking you a question: “Have you ever met a prophet?”

Might I end it by asking you another question: “Are you willing to be a prophet?”
Jesus certainly hopes so!

“Hit the road, pals!”

Photo by Justin Merriman
Theology on Tap for young adults is back!

JULY 16, 2021

Categories: News
Tags: Diocesan News, Featured

https://youtube.com/watch?v=7KsI6cpFk2I
It had been far too long since the Oakland Young Adult Ministry had been able to gather for Theology on Tap. One of their special guests on July 12 was a new bishop—David Bonnar of the Diocese of Youngstown, formerly a priest from Pittsburgh. Bishop Bonnar brought with him Darcy Osby, his director of faith formation from Saint Aidan Parish in Wexford.

They spoke about staying close to Jesus while navigating life’s transitions, especially those brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“God has a plan for you,” Bishop Bonnar told the young adults. “He has a future full of hope for you. But it takes time for that plan to unfold.”

Bishop Bonnar told them how he received the surprising news that Pope Francis had chosen him to lead the Diocese of Youngstown, and that he had to trust God’s plan for him.

In addition to the lockdowns and the challenges that he faced during the pandemic, Bishop Bonnar also transitioned from serving St. Bernard and Our Lady of Grace churches in the South Hills, to pastor of Saint Aidan Parish, before receiving his new assignment.

He encouraged his audience to surrender to God amid transitions, clinging to the Eucharist, the Mass and the Scriptures.

Osby shared her and her husband’s struggle with infertility that led them to become foster parents of a 14-year old girl.

Osby said the time they spent together during the lockdown strengthened their bonds as a family.

“People say that they want to return to normal after the pandemic,” she said. “God does not call us to be normal. He calls us to be saints.”

Max Petrosky, who attends Most Holy Name of Jesus Church, said being able to gather as a large community of young adults was long overdue. He was inspired by the testimonials.

“It was very impressive to hear two people who have two different backgrounds offer their perspectives on transitions in life,” he said

“Bringing back Theology on Tap makes us excited and brings a sense of relief,” said Erica Gamerro, pastoral associate of Saint Paul Cathedral Parish, who oversees the Oakland Young Adult Ministry.

The ministry will host two more Theology on Tap events this summer at McFadden’s on the North Shore:

- Mon. Aug. 9 at 7 p.m.: “Keeping Relationships in Bounds,” featuring Tisha Bridges, diocesan director of Victim Assistance Ministry
- Mon. Sept. 13 at 7 p.m.: Tips on negotiating your professional career as a Catholic, featuring a panel of young adults who work in corporate, healthcare, education, and technology positions

These events are open to all young adults ages 21-39. For updates, follow Oakland Young Adult Ministry @OaklandYAM on Facebook and Instagram.
Reaching out to the stranger

By Father Matthew Hawkins

Parochial vicar, St. Benedict the Moor Parish

At the end of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Jesus’ eleven disciples went to Galilee and climbed the mountain where He said He would meet them. St. Matthew writes, “Then Jesus approached and said to them, ‘All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Our hearts are moved when we read this passage because we recognize in it something that is at the core of who we are as Christians, and what we are called to do. A Christian is a person who is sent, not someone who has turned in on himself or herself in fear of the world. The very meaning of the “Mass,” which we celebrate, is “the sending,” which is derived from “dismissal.” At the end of the Mass we say, “Go forth…”

It is often said that the Church does not have a mission; rather, a mission has a Church. Missionary activity is not just something we do, it is something we are. On July 13, we celebrated the anniversary of the establishment of St. Benedict the Moor as a personal parish in Pittsburgh for African American culture. The parish was originally established in 1889. The anniversary of this personal parish is not only important for the city’s African Americans, it is important for all Catholics in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The reason is simple: few African Americans are Catholic, and few Catholics are African American. We should never be satisfied with this. There are historical reasons that help to explain how this evolved, and there are contemporary circumstances that perpetuate this state of affairs, but we all have a responsibility to address it. Part of the effort in addressing it is by presenting the message and the liturgy of the Catholic Church within the
historical and cultural context of the African American experience, just as we do for every other culture or nationality.

When Jesus said, “make disciples of all nations,” he was giving us the formula for evangelization—the Body of Christ will never be complete until it engages all cultures and peoples on the earth. The Church has something to offer them, and they have something to offer us. Each culture that the Church engages contributes something new and powerful to our worship experience. We learn from them, and they learn from us.

In 2014, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published a manual entitled Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers. It was part of an effort to help those involved in ministry, at all levels within the Church, to work more effectively with diverse populations. The document described “four pillars” of evangelization, pointing toward an understanding of evangelization that “is not directed only to the salvation of individual souls, but to entire societies and cultures.”

The document identifies three impediments to evangelization in the United States today—secularism, individualism, and materialism. In our secular society, people are finding it harder and harder to set aside time, in stillness and silence, to enter into communion with God. In our individualist society, people have become increasingly focused on the self-gratification of individuals so that they have lost sight of the fact that we grow and mature in relation to one another. We grow and mature by being part of a family and part of a community. In our materialist society, people have reduced “reality” to the things that can be weighed, measured, and counted. We have lost the sense that we live in a sacramental world. We have lost a sense of the sacred.

Values built upon secularism, individualism, and materialism make us afraid of “the stranger.” We tend to turn inward and live in protective silos. But this is not the path that Jesus marked out for us. It is not the path that we learned from the apostles. And it is not the path that leads to vibrant, revitalized, and flourishing parishes.

The missionary character of the Church is such that “being sent” is not optional; it activates our life in Christ. Knowledge of Christ is not an abstract concept—it is a lived experience. We cannot know the Christ of sacred scripture if we do not know Christ in our brothers and sisters, whom we still regard as strangers.
Catholic at Home

Jennifer Antkowiak

Over the past few days, I've been involved in many conversations where someone expresses that July is the month where they're “finally taking a break.” After such a draining year, people are longing to get away from it all. Taking regular breaks is an important part of wellness through self-care.

As a mom of five and former family caregiver who works outside the home, I've learned that it's very easy to become consumed by taking care of other people and things...so much so that we put our own health and well-being on a back burner.

When we don't eat well, exercise, and get enough quality sleep, life feels heavy. We get cranky. We don't make the best choices. We aren't productive. All of that leads to frustration and stress.

Taking care of ourselves should be easy, but, I've learned, it's definitely not. Maybe you've caught yourself throwing up blocks like:

“I feel guilty taking time away from my family for myself.”

“I don't have enough time for self-care.”

“Self-care is too expensive.”

People who love and serve others often put their own needs last. When we start feeling like this, we can turn to what we know about Jesus through the Bible. He made time for prayer and rest, even when He knew people needed him. One example is in Luke 5:
“The report about spread all the more, and great crowds assembled to listen to him and to be cured of their ailments, but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray.” (Luke 5:15-16)

Jesus took time for spiritual self-care during his important earthly mission, knowing that connecting with his Father would give Him the strength and energy He needed to care for others.

In another favorite passage that comforts me, Jesus invites us to rest and be restored through a relationship with God:

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy, laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Taking a break to care for ourselves is a blessing that allows us to release any burdens we've been carrying. Self-care, at its heart, is not selfish, but it's humble. We can give ourselves the grace to recognize that we are human, with human needs, weaknesses, and limitations that must be addressed.

Instead of pushing ourselves to go-go-go all the time, we should remind ourselves that it's safe and healthy to look take an honest account of our own needs. If we allow ourselves to get into a pattern of sacrificing our own needs, we increase our chances of becoming bitter, resentful and burned out.

That's not what Jesus wants for us.

I hope you will make some time for yourself this month, to recharge on a regular basis so that you can have the energy you need to serve God, your loved ones, and live a full and happy life.