

# Disciples Stewards

Granite City, Illinois ♦ Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

St. Elizabeth Catholic Church & School

First Sunday of Lent ♦ March 9, 2025

## Testimonies of Our First Two Pilgrims to Uganda

In January, two of our parishioners, Dennis Wilmsmeyer and Cindy Rongey, went on Pilgrimage to Uganda, looking to discover ways that St. Elizabeth might develop focus areas for future pilgrimages and support of the people of Father Alfred's home parish and community. This week, we're excited to share their testimonies and the stories of their journey. Enjoy!



### The Trip of a Thousand Needs

-as told by Pilgrim Dennis Wilmsmeyer

We dubbed our mission trip "the trip of a thousand meals" because everyone we met and everywhere we went, we ate. It is Ugandan hospitality to offer food and drink, especially hot tea to all visitors. But in reality, this was "the trip of a thousand needs."



The first people we met were John and Susan. They both grew up in Nyakyeru (Father's village where his dad, Francis lives) but have since moved to a suburb of Kampala. John has a tourist business and Susan has a gift shop with all merchandise being hand crafted in Uganda and surrounding African countries. She sells whole-

Dennis's testimony continues on page 5

### A Joyous & Productive Meeting

-as told by Pilgrim Cindy Rongey

What started out as a scouting mission for St. Elizabeth Parish to begin a "twinning" or "sister parish" relationship with St. Augustine's Parish in Nyakera, Uganda, turned into a learning experience for members of both Catholic parishes located 7,800 miles apart. Faith in Jesus Christ, the universality of the Catholic Church, and a feeling that we have known one another for a long time, despite it being the first meeting, made for a joyous and productive first trip.

Father Alfred Tumwesigye, our pastor since 2019, is a native of Nyakera, Uganda. In his schooling and travels throughout



Cindy's testimony continues on page 7

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#### ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS

Finance Council: Scott Jones  
School Board: Adam Meyenburg  
Parent/Teacher Org.: Mary Grinstead  
Ladies Sodality: Christine Domagalski  
Holy Name Men's Club: Rob Hutson  
Men at Prayer: Tom Cholevik  
Funeral Dinners: Pam Ames  
Maintenance Team: Bud Charbonnier

**Strong in Faith  
since 1871**

*Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, pray for us.*

# PRAYER & LITURGY

## LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

**Monday, March 10**

**Monday of the First Week of Lent**

No Mass

**Tuesday, March 11**

**Tuesday of the First Week of Lent**

6:00 p.m. Mass:

Charles Polach+ by Andy & Joann Yurko

**Wednesday, March 12**

**Wednesday of the First Week of Lent**

8:15 a.m. Mass:

Tim Scaturro+ by Carol McGee & Family

**Thursday, March 13**

**Thursday of the First Week of Lent**

8:15 a.m. Mass:

Baby Jamie Polling Baxter+

by Deacon & Mrs. Michael Halbrook

**Friday, March 14**

**Friday of the First Week of Lent**

8:15 a.m. Mass:

Mary Danheiser+ by Norma Lesko

**Saturday, March 15**

**Saturday of the First Week of Lent**

No Mass

**Saturday-Sunday, March 15-16**

**Second Sunday of Lent**

4:30 p.m. Saturday Evening Mass:

Steve Dudak+ by Joe & Chris Spanberger

8:00 a.m. Mass: ☪

Parishioners of Saint Elizabeth

10:30 a.m. Mass:

Nancy Gray+ by Pete & Gloria Fields

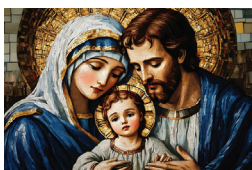
## 14 DAY SANCTUARY LAMP

The 14 Day Sanctuary Lamp burns this week to remind us to pray **for the marginalized; the poor, the homeless, the mentally ill persons in our community.**

## ALTAR FLOWERS

The altar flowers this week are **in thanksgiving for 23 years of Marriage by Bret & Tracy Ware.**

Mass offerings are available (\$10), as are memorials on the 14 Day Candle / Sanctuary Lamp, and Altar Flowers (\$50). Contact the parish office.



March is  
dedicated to  
Saint Joseph

## Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for March:

**For broken families & families in crisis:**

Pray that broken families might discover the cure for their wounds through forgiveness, rediscovering each other's gifts, even in their differences.

## This Sunday: First Sunday of Lent

Deut 26:4-10; Rom 10:8-13; Lk 4:1-13

In the first reading, Moses explains to the people how they are to offer their firstfruits to the Lord. Paul explores the connection between faith, its profession, and salvation and justification. After his baptism, Jesus spends 40 days in the desert where he encounters the devil and resists his temptations.

## Next Sunday: Second Sunday of Lent

Gen 15:5-12, 17-18; Phil 3:17—4:1; Lk 9:28b-36

In the first reading, God makes a covenant with Abram, promising descendants as numerous as the stars and land for them to inhabit. Paul tells the Philippians to imitate him, conducting themselves not as enemies of the cross, but standing firm in the Lord. In the Gospel, Jesus is transfigured on the mountain; Moses and Elijah appear with him in glory.



## PRAYERS FOR OUR PRIESTS

The following priests of our Diocese are celebrating birthdays soon: 3/2- Rev. Angel Sierra 3/3- Rev. Hyland Smith 3/9- Rev. Brian Alford Rev. Dominic Vahling 3/10- Rev. Michael Trummer 3/15- Rev. Mark Schulte 3/16- Rev. Samuel Bagyo Jr. 3/17- Rev. Pat Jakel 3/26- Rev. Daren Zehnle 3/27- Rev. John Nolan

The following are priests and deacons of our Diocese who have died. Please remember them in your daily prayers: 2/26- Rev. Timothy M. Moloney 2/28- Rev. Thomas Cusack Rev. P.j. O'Reilly Rev. E.J. Cahill Rev. Thomas E. Cusack 3/2 Rev. John A. Mark Rev. P.J. Kerry 3/3- Rev. Michael Pendergast Rev. William Neu Rev. John O'Donnell

## FIRST FRIDAY MEMORIALS

**June 2024 to May 2025**

Paula G. Koliste

Pfaff & DeRuntz Families

Deceased Members of St. Elizabeth Choir

Deceased Members of St. Elizabeth Mens

Club

Gene Cassy

Jim Deder

Cassy Family

Pieper Family

Crawshaw Family

Binney Family

Kim Edgar

Chad Sigite

Jim & Lisa Fensterman

Charles Dickey

Louise Harrison

Kenneth R. Jaimet

Ann Fabisher

Carol McGee

Karen Romeri

Ed Lyndsey

Czwornog & Ostrenga Families

Richard A. Willaredt

Lisa Dellamano

Rosalie Boyd

Jim Dittman

Pawlak & Sertich Families

Kierski Family

John & Theresa Straubinger

Carl Williams

Joseph & Victoria Krystopa

Michael & Leona Bonach

Nancy Gray

Karen Winters- Weiland

Alan Winters

Keith Winters

Bill Loftus

Jim Alsop & Family

Dortch Family

Jones Family

Glen Hommert

Inez & Brian Foreman

Tony & Mary Bellue

Jesse & Loraine Gonterman

Lesko & Danheiser Families

Harbin & Jones Families

Angela & Ronald Briggs Jr.

Delores Brinker

Brinker & Soboleski Families

Pattie Jackson

Ida Gragg

Robert & Lorraine Joshu

Lee & Connie Hayes Family

Votoupal/Bursisk Family

Pfaff & DeRuntz Families

Deceased Members of Ladies Sodality

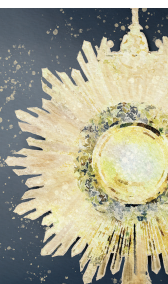
**Be with Jesus**

**Adoration**

Thursdays 9 am - 9 pm

**Holy Hour**

Sundays 7-8 pm



## PRAYERS FOR OUR MILITARY

Nolan Yehling- USAF, Whiteman AFB; Brandon Weidner- US Coast Guard, Sault Sainte Marie, MI; Kody Presswood- Staff Sergeant, US Space Force, Colorado Springs, CO; Nick Glasgow- USMC, CA



## PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

We commit ourselves to the discipleship and stewardship way of life as commanded by Jesus Christ and revealed by Sacred Scripture and Tradition. We are committed to implementing the Four Pillars of Discipleship and Stewardship of our diocese:

**Hospitality:** To maintain a warm and welcoming environment, and invite others to join us in prayer, especially Sunday Mass;

**Prayer:** To journey the path to Heaven together through celebration of the sacraments and ever-deepening lives of prayer;

**Formation:** To continue sharing, learning, and accepting the teachings of our Lord and His Church; and

**Service:** To share our Lord's Love by reaching out to all in service, especially the afflicted.

## PARISH LIFE & HOSPITALITY

### SCHOLARSHIP TIME!

#### MARVIN WIEDEMER SCHOLARSHIP

The Marvin Wiedemer Scholarship is a monetary award to be submitted to the Catholic High School on behalf of the recipient. It is available to students graduating from St. Elizabeth School who plan to attend a Catholic High School in the following fall.

Required To Apply: Obtain an application form from the parish or school office.

1. The form should be completed and returned to the parish or school office along with:
2. A copy of your current transcript.
3. Deadline for submitting the application is Friday March 31, 2025.

#### REISKE COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

The Applications are now available at the Parish Office. Any college bound parishioner is eligible who: Graduated from St. Elizabeth School, Presently is a member of St. Elizabeth Parish, Is active in the Parish, Attends Mass EVERY WEEKEND, Has financial need.

Applications are due by Friday, March 31, 2025, no later than 4:00 p.m. Fr. Alfred and the Selection Committee will then review the applications and present their selection to the Pastoral Council. First time applicants will have preferential consideration and no one applicant will be awarded the scholarship more than two times.

#### LADIES SODALITY SCHOLARSHIP

High school seniors: Pick up your scholarship packet at the parish office. To qualify, you must be a St. Elizabeth graduate, attend mass at St. Elizabeth, and be planning to attend college or a technical school. This scholarship is not based on financial need; it is based on your church and high school activities. Deadline will be April 15. Joyce Alexander, Scholarship Chairperson.

### SCRAP METAL TIME!

Do you have unused scrap aluminum or metal at your house? Are you preparing for Spring cleaning and want a useful way to recycle your metal? The Men's

Club continues to collect scrap metal for recycling, using it to offset small expenses around the campus. Please help us to raise funds for the Church and School by donating your scrap metal. Call the parish office for dropoff information, or if you need large items like appliances (ground floor level) picked up from your home.

#### CATHOLIC WOMENS PRAYER BREAKFAST MARCH 22

Women: You are invited to attend the Catholic Women's Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, March 22 at St. Paul Catholic Church in Highland. Adoration begins at 7 a.m., then the Rosary at 7:30 a.m., then Mass at 8 a.m. with breakfast afterward, and then a talk by Bishop Thomas John Paprocki. Pre-registration is required for the breakfast meal. The cost is \$30. Register before March 1 to reserve your spot and meal ticket. Proceeds benefit our seminarians. For more information, email: [womensbreakfast2025@gmail.com](mailto:womensbreakfast2025@gmail.com) or text Rose Wascher at 847-274-3916. REGISTER AT: [stpaulhighland.org](http://stpaulhighland.org).

#### FIRST RECONCILIATION

Congratulations to our second graders who received the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time last week!



**NET RETREAT** The 5th-8th graders of St. Elizabeth & Holy Family were able to enjoy a retreat from NET Ministries this past week. Thank you to all who helped and make this possible!



## THIS WEEK

### Sunday, March 9

Daylight Savings - Turn Clocks Forward 1 hour Saturday night

9:15-10:15 a.m. - PSR (PLC)

7-8 p.m. - Holy Hour with Vespers & Benediction (Church)

### Monday, March 10

### Tuesday, March 11

6:30 p.m. - Lenten Book Study (Harmony)

7 p.m. - Columbus Home Meeting (Columbus Home)

7-8:30 p.m. - Choir Rehearsal (Church)

### Wednesday, March 12

7 p.m. - BINGO (Columbus Home)

### Thursday, March 13

6:30 p.m. - PTO (Cafeteria)

7 p.m. - OCIA (Parish Life Center)

9 a.m. - 9 p.m. - Adoration (Church); Benediction at 9 p.m.

### Friday, March 14

4-7 p.m. - Fish Fry

### Saturday, March 15

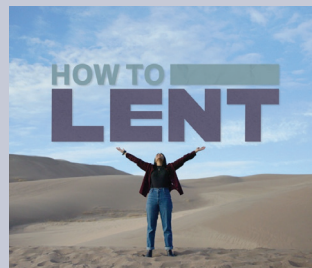
### Sunday, March 16

9 a.m. - Men at Prayer (PLC)

9:15-10:15 a.m. - PSR (PLC)

7-8 p.m. - Holy Hour with Vespers & Benediction (Church)

## This Week on **FORMED**



### How to Lent

Lent is right around the corner. In 'How to Lent', you will be guided by priests and religious in the disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving so that you can make this your best Lent yet.

Thanks to our Men's Club, parishioners have access to free Catholic programming on FORMED on any device.

Go to [signup.FORMED.org](http://signup.FORMED.org) and select our parish name.

### Mercy Minute

"O hidden Jesus, in the many struggles of my last hour,

May the omnipotence of Your grace be poured out upon my soul,

That at death's moment I may gaze upon You

And see You face to face, as do the chosen in heaven."

(Diary, 1479)



## FORMATION

**LENTEN MISSION**

FEATURING  
ZIP RZEPPA  
\*Former KMOV Sportscaster  
THEME: Discipleship, Evangelization & Hope

**Disciples & Stewards**

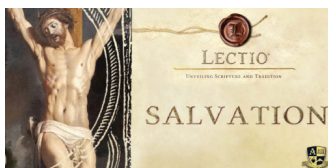
**6:30PM, MARCH 24, 25 & 26**  
Childcare available  
Reception in Harmony  
Room after Final Evening

### COMING INTO THE CHURCH

If you or someone you know is not yet Baptized, received into the Catholic Church (including those who may have already been Baptized in another Christian tradition), or fully initiated with the Sacraments of Confirmation and/or Holy Eucharist, contact the parish office for more information. Someone from our pastoral team will be overjoyed to meet with you and discuss your path. Know of our prayers for you!

### NATIONAL SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS - DAY OF REFLECTION

"Gifts from Friends We Never Wanted" Presenter: Virginia Herbers. Monday, March 10, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Shrine Visitors Center. \$60 per person, lunch included. Unwelcome guests are not generally greeted with gratitude but occasionally they become unexpected friends bearing gifts we never would have asked for. This Lenten Day of Reflection will focus on a few of these surprising guests in our lives – disappointment, worry, failure – and the gifts they provide when they come visiting. Using a gospel figure as companion, we will engage these uninvited "friends" and learn something about ourselves and our God in the process.



What does "Salvation" mean? In this video series, Scripture scholar & theologian Michael Patrick Barber provides a thorough, deeply Catho-

olic, and deeply biblical answer. St. Cecilia Catholic Church, 155 N. Main St., Glen Carbon. Sunday 9:35 a.m. or Monday 7 p.m. or Tuesday 10:30 a.m., 10 Sessions, March 2-May 13. \$10 study guide cost. Contact Paula: [faithformation@stcparish.org](mailto:faithformation@stcparish.org) or 618-288-3200.

### Lenten Book Study: "Walk in Her Sandals - Experiencing Christ's Passion through the Eyes of Women", by Kelly M. Wahlquist

Tammi Mooshegian was fortunate to be able to go to the Springfield Diocesan Counsel of Catholic Women's retreat in Carlinville last year, along with Marilyn Hahn. One of their speakers, Kelly M. Wahlquist, gave a wonderful talk on the women of today and she is the founder of WINE: Women in the New Evangelization.

Tammi will be leading a book study on her book starting on Wednesday, February 26th at 6:30pm. The books are available in the office for \$11.00. I will provide weekly questions for you to ponder as you read each section.

Forward taken from the book study guide: Walk in Her Sandals is chock full of reflections by women on the last days of Jesus. But the point of it all, as the subtitle makes clear, is not so much to read what other women think, as is to use their reflections as a springboard to experiencing more fully those mysteries of faith yourself. Sarah Christmyer, Catholic Author, Bible teacher and speaker. She blogs at [ComeIntoTheWord.com](http://ComeIntoTheWord.com)

- Tuesday March 11th: The Gift of Sensitivity

- Tuesday March 18th: The Gift of Prayer

- Tuesday April 1st: The Gift of Maternity

- Tuesday April 8th The Gift of the Holy Spirit and Conclusion

I hope you will pray about joining us as we discuss this book and feed off each other's enthusiasm.

"Walk in Her Sandals is a devotional tapestry, richly woven from the poignant threads of women's intimate experiences in Jesus" - Sonja Corbet, Catholic Speaker, radio host and author of Unleashed.

If you have questions please contact Tammi at 618-920-1792.

**It's not too late to join us!**

### YOUNG DISCIPLES

Join us Tuesday, March 4, 6:30-8 in the Harmony Room for Fellowship, Faith, Food and Fun. Bring a friend. You may come early for 6 pm Holy Mass. Hope to see you there!

### YOUNG DISCIPLES SOCIETY



## *Dennis's testimony, "The Trip of a Thousand Needs", continued from page 1:*

sale and retail. Their need? For Susan to be able to expand her business in order to buy and resell more handcrafted goods from the Ugandan people and provide a bigger income for them.

Next, we came to the Poor Clare Sisters. They are a cloistered order and we stayed at their guest house. The sisters are trying to be self-supporting with various businesses. They make and sell hosts and altar wine, and they have a print shop, make candles, and operate a farm with three dairy cows. The farm is mainly to feed themselves, but if they chose to sell their homemade cheese they could be millionaires. It was that good! In addition to growing all these business endeavors, they also hope to build a conference center with additional guest rooms attached to their guest house.

From there, Father showed us the Archdiocesan Cathedral, offices, seminary, and rectory. The seminary has a new building under construction to house the large number of candidates for priesthood. This year, the archbishop was only able to accept three men out of sixty applicants because he only had space for three men.

We met several priests as we toured the grounds of the archdiocese, which also means we were offered - and obligated to accept - many cups of tea and bananas. Several priests voiced a need for their people to be properly catechized. They pointed out that while in America we have smaller numbers of Mass attendees, they have large numbers in the pews. However, they have small numbers of these people receiving Holy Communion, mainly because so many people are living in invalid marriages.

The Archdiocese, like the Sisters and the parishes, strive to be self-supporting by getting involved in commerce. The Archdiocese of Mbarara is the major shareholder in the Centenary Bank, which they opened during their 100th anniversary. They also have a gas station, a small convenience store, and a gift shop. They sell produce from their farm while also feeding the priests and seminarians from their farm.

When we met with the Archbishop at the end of our trip and asked him what his greatest need is, he wisely answered, "It depends on who you ask." If you ask parents, they will say education for their children. If you ask him, it is a bigger seminary and the money to educate seminarians. He also needs to be able to enlarge rectories at parishes to be able to house more than two priests, plus find the money to pay more than two priests per parish.

When we arrived at Father's parish and met the rector, Father Felix, his needs were many.

Let me pause here and explain that a parish in Uganda is different than a parish in the USA. In Uganda, a parish is a main church with a rectory that houses two priests. There are outlying churches that those two priests also supply. In the parish of Ntungamo, there are 28 outlying churches scattered through the mountains in small villages. Two priests supply for 28 parishes! That means that each church only gets Sunday Mass once every 14 weeks! They only get to receive the Eucharist four times per year, celebrate Baptisms four times per year and have opportunity to go to Confession four times a year. By comparison, we are so fortunate to be able to go to Confession any day of the week by appointment or on Saturday afternoons when Confession is regularly scheduled. We are able to receive the Eucharist six days a week at our own church or seven days a week with a little further drive on Father's day off.

Back to Fr. Felix and the needs of his parish. The most urgent need during our visit was the need to replace the parish car that was recently stolen. Without a car, the two priests must walk to get to the outlying churches and so Masses will be even less than four times per year. Other needs include the money to start a parish school right at their church, build a proper rectory (the priests currently live in a building meant to be parish offices), find ways to sell coffee beans from the parish farm and from other individuals in the community, and to be able to pay a third priest after the new rectory is built.



Moving down the very bumpy dirt roads, we find Nyakyera, Father's home village. Here the needs only increase. They began to build a church nine years ago. They have constructed a basic structure that needs to be plastered inside and out. They currently have a floor of large fist-sized rocks, and they hope to soon pour a concrete floor. Pouring concrete means hand mixing the cement with sand, rocks, and water, and pouring it in small batches. There is no concrete truck, no hand mixer, and no electric mixer. Mixing is done on the ground, with shovels and sweat, and pouring is done from wheelbarrow and bucket. They need to complete the brick work over the space for the tabernacle, lay flooring over the concrete, plaster the unfinished walls, put glass in

the windows and doors in the nine doorways, add an altar and a tabernacle, candle holders, an ambo, statues, banners, pews, and kneelers. In the meantime, they use the unfinished building, kneeling right on those large rocks, using a makeshift altar, and sitting on wood benches that are moved in and out, as they are shared with the school through the week.

The school, St Augustine School, is comprised of four buildings that house ten classrooms with four hundred and forty (440) students. The classrooms were hand-built by the parents and are either made of stick and mud (mixed with straw and cow dung), or horizontal planks nailed to wood posts. There is no glass in the windows, there are no doors in the doorways. There are dirt floors, no electricity, and no running water. The saddest sight was the restroom, a wood hut with no door on the doorway and a twenty-foot hole in the dirt floor. There is no toilet paper and no place to wash your hands afterwards. When that hole is full, or caves in from the soft soil, a new hole is dug by the parents.



The greatest need of the school, according to the representatives of the parish council and school board, is for permanent classrooms. This wish includes a proper restroom with a septic tank, a kitchen to provide facilities to cook lunch for the students and the staff, housing for the staff who don't all live close by, proper offices, and eventually boarding facilities for students who now must walk up to two hours each way to go to school. This doesn't even mention the need for textbooks. Currently there are no textbooks. Teachers write the lessons on blackboards and children copy into their notebooks. For this, they don't even have proper chalkboards, but instead pieces of wood that they painted with black paint.

Some parents cannot afford the school fees (tuition), so children are in and out of school as funds allow. Because of this, the age range in each classroom is as much as five years between youngest and oldest student in a single grade.



Some families cannot afford the four notebooks and pencils and pens required for the children. One preschool student was using her brother's old notebook and writing her work in the random blank spaces.

Members of our parish donated pencils for us to give out. We were able to give each student a new pencil with some left to give to teachers for future needs. This donation also included small pencil sharpeners. We gave the school three new soccer balls, which were put to immediate use with nearly all the boys joining in a soccer game with me. I got to play a girl's game called Net Ball, best described as a form of dodge ball. With my lack of athletic ability, I did not hit a single person. Those pencils and soccer balls are treasured gifts to them as valuable as gold, and brought many, many smiles and "thank yous". Teachers were given boxes of flashcards, which will make their job easier as they do not have to print everything on the blackboard now. Can you imagine if we could have handed them textbooks?

The needs did not stop there. Father took us to meet the Sisters of Fatima, an order begun in Uganda. They, too, strive to be self-sufficient making candles, vestments, hosts, altar wine, and school notebooks, as well as school uniforms. They feed themselves from their own farm. They would like electric sewing machines (220 voltage, not 110 like ours) to replace the treadle machines they currently use. And of course, any increase to their business revenue will be a great gift. We did purchase six altar candles that will be used in our own parish, as well as a special new white vestment for Father. If we are able to purchase notebooks for the students at St Augustine School, we will purchase them from the Sisters of Fatima and thereby do two good turns with one act.

A side note here: the sister who cooked our lunch recognized Father Alfred and brought a photo to show him. She was about 12 years old and stood between a newly-ordained Father Alfred and her Principal in the photo. Father had given a vocations talk at her school the day the photo was taken. Sister attributed the start of her vocation to that talk. We took a current photo of them together in front of the chapel. I promised to repeat the same photo one day when Father Alfred is Pope and sister is the Mother Superior.

After our visit there, Father drove us to the Rwanda/Uganda border, where we picked up another nun. Sister Betty is from Uganda but works in Rwanda, and she needed to come back to Uganda for a family visit and to do some business. She expressed the needs of her community and the church in Rwanda as well.

So you see the work to be done is vast, and the needs are many. Fulfilling some of these needs will also benefit us directly. If the Archbishop can ordain more men, then he may be able to supply a couple more priests to our diocese in the future. If we can build permanent classrooms with a better restroom, those educated children will grow up and contribute



to society, and maybe one of them will cure cancer or solve the problem of pollution and garbage in our world. Perhaps one of them will become a doctor or nurse and set up their practice here.

Even if we gain no direct benefit from helping to fulfill these needs, we will gain their prayers and their gratitude. Most of all, we will be doing for Christ as we do “for the least of these.” Our duty is to prayerfully consider which needs to meet and how to do that without bringing any harm. Please listen for the quiet whisper of the Holy Spirit inspiring you to make the trip to Uganda, offer to help another pilgrim pay for their trip, and provide for these many needs.

Here is one inspiration for you provided by the Ladies’ Sodality of Father’s home parish in Uganda: Several women gave up buying meat for their family’s Christmas dinner and used that money to purchase decorations for the main parish church. This is in a community where families can only afford to eat meat once or twice a month and they gave that up on Christmas to make the House of God more fitting for Him. What can we give up to help? Can we give up new golf clubs, or cut out one round of golf per month and donate that money? Can we give up coloring our hair, or getting our nails done professionally? Can we drink only water when we eat out and donate the cost of the soda or beer or wine we normally drink? Can we adjust the thermostat and donate the money we save on the electric bill? What sacrifice can we make, long term, to be able to contribute to the need of the church in Uganda?

Oh yeah, and while we do that, we still need to continue to give to St Elizaeth’s parish.



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## ***Cindy’s testimony, “A Joyous & Productive Meeting”, continued from page 1:***

the United States, he has been effective in establishing friendships that have led to donations that have put a roof on his hometown’s church at St. Augustine’s, brought used medical equipment to remote medical centers in the region, and established a network of contacts on two continents.

His desire to bring two parishes together to form friendships started years ago when he landed in the United States at the approval of his Bishop in Uganda to continue his schooling. Ultimately, Father Alfred located in our Diocese of Springfield in Illinois and was named pastor of our St. Elizabeth Church. He received his doctorate in Health Care Leadership in May 2024. In January 2025, the first two parishioners from Granite City spent ten days with Father Alfred, meeting the Ugandan people including priests, seminarians, nuns, local officials, and even the archbishop, visiting the St. Augustine School and their PTO, the Church, and their leaders, including the Ladies Organization, and planning many ways to build a relationship.

How does one begin to describe Uganda and the incredible opportunity that was given to visit the country? First, it is beautiful. The hills, valleys, mountains, variety of trees, and the seemingly endless and colorful bird species, all so different than in the United States, are some of the first things that a traveler will notice. The countryside goes on and on, and even in the remotest parts, people have made their homes and their livelihood. The scenic views almost seem to be taken for granted, particularly when every step provides yet a different perspective of the valleys and the majestic mountain ranges.



Nearly every small town has a roadside market. This appears to be the primary way for every family to try to make money and provide for their families. It was said that Uganda has the most entrepreneurs in the world, but that many businesses fail in the first year of business due to competition. Here at the roadside markets, the sales of goods occur. Foods including bananas, pineapple, tomatoes, and corn are standard at nearly every town, but they have five, ten or twenty vendors selling the same items, and it appears, very few buyers.

Surprisingly, nearly every town also has a mattress supplier, at least one maker of beautiful handcrafted furniture, and talented metal manufacturers for door and window openings at prices so inexpensive it’s hard to believe how they can survive without a lot of sales. Charcoal makers are

prevalent as well. The charcoal is made from remnants of wood that was burned, cooled, and then bagged for sale to families for cooking purposes. This is especially important for those living in higher altitudes where the land will not support much tree growth.

The open grazing of goats and cattle are common along the shoulders of the roads and even in the narrow grass medians. Long-horned steers are so close to passing motorcycles and vehicles that you are sure that someone will end up meeting their Maker sooner than planned. The cattle are thin compared to United States standards, which may make for tastier meat, but eating beef is not a daily staple of the Ugandan diet. It is a luxury. Chicken is more common and those birds are far more prevalent at family homes than cattle. Foods in Uganda that are shared common with the U.S. diet include eggs, rice, potatoes, bananas, pineapple, and watermelon. Ugandan dishes such as matoke (cooked plantain), peanut sauce, and millet bread (uncooked flour and hot water mixture) served in small handwoven baskets, are common staples in any Ugandan meal. There is little to no sugar in a meal, except what may exist naturally in the fruits. This is one of the likely reasons that teeth are beautiful everywhere in Uganda, even with no dentists around, and everyone is thin. (Of course, this is paired with everyone working hard and walking everywhere.)



Bananas are very abundant and are used both as a snack between meals as well as often served during the meal itself. The tropical climate, at the Equator, supports banana tree growth and in turn provides a great way for almost anyone to make money. Banana plantations are in every village and located all across Uganda, though I never quite understood how many acres of banana trees it actually took to be considered a “plantation.” In some cases, I believe 20 to 30 trees could be a plantation. I was surprised to learn that one tree will support only one bunch of bananas. Once harvested, the tree will die. Most trees will reproduce from the base and grow a new tree which will produce in six to nine months.

Hot tea is milk-based, not water-based, and is surprisingly good, though it really threw me off at the mayor’s house after dinner, as I wondered what concoction they were making for me. For the Starbucks lovers, bring your own coffee maker, since the closest thing you can find to coffee is instant Nescafé. Part of the reason for the abundance of milk-tea drinkers is that bottled water is the only sure and safe drinking water around. Dairy cows provide the freshest and most abundant supply of liquid nourishment.

Empty water bottles have created a major environmental issue. Piles of plastic bottles can be found in larger towns, presumably awaiting a recycler to pick them up. One story I heard was that locally they shred the plastic bottles and ship the plastic to China, where it is recycled and then returned to Uganda in a different form. It seems expensive, but with little to no manufacturing based in Uganda, it may be the only option.



The people are delightful. As welcoming as they are, with large smiles and so thoughtful and generous, it’s easy to forget that most have very little to give. The Ladies’ Organization with the Church shared a story that they decorated the Church at Christmas with colorful ribbon. In order to pay for it, they gave up their family’s portion of meat for the one meal in December that they would have enjoyed. (Many families can only afford meat at one meal per month.) A sacrifice for Jesus Christ, and as these ladies saw it, constituted a small sacrifice in return for Jesus’s love for them.

Building construction is brick-based. In the U.S., brick is one of the most expensive building materials. When we asked Father Alfred why every home is made of stone or brick when it seemingly would be the most expensive, and that wood would be a better option, he simply pointed out into many of the fields where large, four-to six-foot tall earthen hills were located. “Those are termite hills,” he said.

We visited one of many brick-making areas. The red clay soil is perfect for bricks. Mixed with water to make mud, the mud is packed into a small rectangular frame and the “brick” is laid out in the sun to dry. Once dried, it is stacked eight to ten feet tall with two openings all the way through the stack at the bottom. The exterior of the stack is then covered in mud and dried grass is laid on top of the brick pile. A fire with large logs burn underneath to heat the entire stack. After about thirty-six (36) hours of heat, the grass on top begins to burn, indicating that the “fired” bricks are now cooked thoroughly enough. The logs for the fire are removed and the openings are closed with bricks and mud to allow the bricks to cook longer. When cooled, the bricks are ready for use as pavers or building construction.

Temporary buildings, like the classrooms at St. Augustine School, are made of wood walls covered with mud and straw. To provide a “weatherproof” coating so that the rain doesn’t destroy the mud walls, a coating of cow dung provides a very effective protective layer. The school classrooms have dirt floors, and door and window openings (without the doors and windows). The classrooms are separated by a slatted wood wall that is easily seen and heard through from one class-



room to the next. The school supports more than four hundred and fifty (450) students, each of whom is eager to learn, and many of whom walk several miles to school each day, some with no shoes. The younger students sit on a large mat provided by the parents. The older students sit on wooden benches that are carried to the church and locked up in the Sacristy since it is the only metal locked door on the entire complex.

Being able to share a donation of pencils and soccer balls was one of the highlights of the trip, when the students were overwhelmed to receive their very own pencil and a shared soccer ball with a pump. Young children are quite creative and make their own soccer balls out of dried banana leaves and twine. Most of these balls can take hours to make but only last about thirty minutes of hard play.

Homes, churches, and other buildings can take ten years or more to complete. As funds become available, the next portion of the building is addressed. In many cases, it is the homeowners themselves who are doing all of the construction work, or in the case of the Church, volunteers. Father Alfred celebrated Mass at St. Augustine's Church on a Saturday morning. The church is beautiful but has been under construction for years. It currently has a rock floor, no glass for the window openings, and no doors. They intend to plaster the interior walls soon, likely after putting in a concrete floor. The congregation knelt on sharp rocks during the Mass, and when seated, were on the benches used by the school children for class.

Transportation is tough. There are primary two-lane highways across the country, and paved streets in many of the cities, but accessing the villages is by dirt (not rock) roads. Past washouts and ruts from formerly muddy roads during the rainy season create a very bumpy car ride known as the "Ugandan massage." Vehicles are not the prevalent form of transportation and are a luxury in most cases. Walking, or bicycling (if you are fortunate enough to own one) are the major means of getting around in the villages. Motorcycle taxis (called "Boda Boda") are absolutely the way to get around in the larger towns and cities. Unfortunately, there are few controls on pollution, and the exhaust from an overabundance of motorcycles can be eye-opening, coming from a country with strict controls in place.



The challenges in Uganda are manifold. In such mountainous, sparsely-populated regions with major elevation differences, how do you cost-effectively extend basic utilities to most or every home? Clean drinking water is nonexistent. Indoor flush toilets are a luxury and fairly rare. It takes money to live and making money is difficult without any funds to start with (start-up capital), and when you are competing as an entrepreneur with so many others selling the same items. Major electrical transmission lines carry power a long distance from the hydroelectric generating facilities on the Nile River. While many villages have access to the electricity, it can be unreliable, as we experienced just prior to dinner one evening with Father Felix at the St. Joseph Rectory. That night, the power outage was just long enough for us to wonder if it was really going to come back on. It can also be expensive enough to forego the extension of electricity, as we saw at St. Augustine School, where the classrooms have no electricity and where they rely on daylight for their learning.

We had the distinct pleasure to experience the capital of Uganda, the city of Kampala. The metropolitan area has a population of four million, and I truly believe every one of them was sitting in the Kampala "rush hour" traffic jam with us, which was three lanes of vehicle traffic so close that it felt like the passengers of the adjacent cars were in our own car. In the three feet or so between the lanes, motorcycle taxis zig-zagged their way through the traffic trying to get their passengers to their destination. When the motorcycles weren't present, street vendors walked amongst the traffic, selling anything and everything, including toilet paper, windshield wipers, steering wheel covers, bagged peas, and fruit. It seemed as though no one paid attention to the two ambulances with sirens also fighting to move forward every inch they could. On the left shoulder of the road, were the static street vendors waiting for buyers in the left lane to make their purchases. It appeared most of the vendors had been camped there all day, and likely they are each day of the week and weekends.

The primary culture of the Ugandan people is a welcoming nature shown by their insistence to provide you food. I honestly went





into this trip thinking I would lose weight, and took along snack bars and other sustenance in the event that the food didn't agree with me. With the exception of a couple pieces of chocolate, I never touched any of the snacks I brought along. What I found was that you should expect to eat three full meals a day, and that if you don't, your hosts will worry that you will waste away. Although I didn't weigh myself before or after the trip, I am pretty sure that I put on a few pounds, which is interesting, when you consider that a lot of the food was fruit or fruit-based with little to no added sugar. The other noticeable trait of the Ugandan people is that they are focused and hard working. Everywhere we went, people were walking, carrying items, pushing loaded bicycles uphill, harvesting fruit, selling items, cooking, working for others, and just generally being busy.

The spirit of the people in Uganda is what I imagine that the USA was 80 or more years ago: growing population, hard-working, Christ-centered, healthy, little to no mental health issues, low suicide rate, and very few addiction problems. But even for the remote villages in Uganda, it seems to be changing. One can already see the cell phone and internet creeping in and stealing time and attention from the family structure. In most of the large meetings we had in the villages, I saw two or three villagers (no children) with smart phones. I wonder what that will look like three to five years. This was a large part of the discussion we had with the Poor Clare Sisters, a cloistered convent in Mbarara, Uganda.

The Poor Clares have removed themselves from the outside world, spending hours every day in prayer for the salvation of all souls. Many hours are also spent in hard work with their chores for taking care of three dairy cows, harvesting bananas, preparing meals for the convent, and making (and selling) hosts and wine for local churches. It was an honor to meet with the fifteen or so nuns together, to discuss our impressions (and jealousy) of their very Catholic culture, and to dispel a common myth in Uganda that married couples in the United States only have one child. Visitors to the Poor Clares are welcome to come on Sunday to see their family members. Aside from these visits, and cell phones kept by the Mother

Abbess and one other nun, the Poor Clares do not stay in touch with the outside world.

Even the Poor Clare Sisters are struggling. Their guest house accommodations for us were wonderful, but they too find it difficult to pay their bills. They have plans for adding on more rooms and adding a conference area so that they can attract more guests and bring in more revenue to support their operations. Unlike in the United States, religious organizations are not tax-exempt in Uganda, so the churches, convents, and even the Dioceses become entrepreneurial in order to bring in more revenue. The Poor Clares' plan to open a conference center is a natural and logical step in order to bring in additional funds. Similarly, St. Joseph's Church opened a gas station, and the Diocese operates a mini-mart with its large gas station.

The other struggle that was evident was that the Poor Clares and other religious orders like the Sisters of Fatima are finding it more difficult to attract younger women, while the Diocese is turning away potential seminarians because they have less rooms than they need to house them, and because of the cost to educate them. We shared our desire to open a convent of either order of nuns in Granite City, and are trying to figure out how best to help their Diocese with housing and educating the

seminarians become priests.

Our overall focus, though, remains on St. Augustine School. How can we best help them achieve their stated goal of a new permanent school for their 450+ students? Our initial intent was to get a group together from St. Elizabeth Parish to spend a few weeks there building them a new school. Practically speaking, they have their own construction techniques and we would not have our tools. Raising funds (approximately \$200,000) for the new school and installing windows and doors in the Church are likely a more possible project, and is a potential item to be considered by our Parish for our upcoming Capital Campaign.

We saw so much more including a beautiful view of Lake Bunyonyi, a meeting with Sacco Bank (an agricultural-finance group trying to give Ugandans loans for commercial farming and provide better farm yields), Sisters of Fatima where we toured their priest vestment and candle-making business, dinner with Archbishop Lambert, had tea with Father Alfred's father and step mother, met several other of his relatives, and made two trips to the Rwandan border. We had breakfast with John and Susan (friends of Father Alfred's), met John's mother where Father Alfred taught us how to grind millet flour, visited and purchased African items from Susan's shop in Kampala, toured some of the remote outposts of the Catholic Church, visited a medical clinic and received a good understanding of the healthcare system, and became instant "millionaires" when we exchanged a couple of hundred US Dollars for Ugandan shillings. Words and pictures cannot adequately describe the trip. The only way to fully grasp it is to go and see it for yourself. A second trip to Uganda is being planned for June 2025.





## STEWARDSHIP

**Due to the need to complete the bulletin and send it to our publisher early this week, Stewardship numbers for the weekends of March 1-2 and March 8-9 will both be reported next week, March 16. Thank you for your understanding!**

### ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

Printed Contribution Statements for calendar year 2024 will be available in the Gathering Space for parishioners who do not have a good email address in our Parish records. If we have a good email address for you on file, your Giving Statement was emailed to you on Friday, January 17, and would have come from "Pushpay". Please check your email for your statement. If you would like to help the parish save on paper, ink, envelopes and stamps (for those out-of-town donors who need to be mailed), and would like to have future Contribution Statements emailed to you instead of printed, please contact the Parish Office so we can update our records. Thank you.

### NEW ONLINE GIVING OPTIONS

Please consider making your donation through Pushpay online giving. Your donation through Pushpay will help your dollar go further with our parish in comparison to giving by check or our previous online giving platform. The donations are additionally more secure than check giving and easier for administrative team processing of your giving statements at the end of the year.

**Step One:** Please select one of the following links to set up either a one-time gift or a recurring gift using Pushpay: One-Time Entry: <https://pushpay.com/g/stelizabetchgranitecity>  
Recurring Entry: <https://pushpay.com/g/stelizabetchgranitecity?r=monthly> (After you set up your recurring gift, you will be prompted to complete the setup of your new account)

**Step Two:** Cancel scheduled gifts in Give Central

If you are currently not giving on-line and would like to make the transition, please take the above steps to start the online giving process. Thank you!

If you have questions or need help, please see Bret or Jackie in the parish office.

### WEEKLY STEWARDSHIP REFLECTION

**"I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O Lord, have given to me." - Deuteronomy 26:10** This line from the Old Testament offers two challenges. First, do you give to God from your "first fruits" – the first and best that you have to offer? Or do you give from what you have leftover? Second, do you realize that everything you have and that everything you are has been given to you by God? We aren't owners of anything, we are merely stewards of God's gifts. Pray for a grateful and generous heart, every day, in all circumstances.

FATHER MCGIVNEY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

SCAN ME



## MEN'S PRAYER Breakfast



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## SACRAMENTS

**Reconciliation:** In addition to Confessions offered from 3-4 p.m. on Saturdays, you can also schedule an individual time for Reconciliation.

**Anointing of the Sick:** Appropriate for any upcoming surgery, prolonged illness, or in the event of emergency or danger of death. Please call the office if you or a loved one needs to be anointed.

**Infant & Child Baptism:** For children under the age of 8, please submit the forms at [stelizabethgc.org/baptism](http://stelizabethgc.org/baptism) at least a month before your desired date. For questions or emergencies, please contact the Parish Office.

**Matrimony:** To begin preparation for Holy Matrimony, please contact the parish office to set up initial appointments and preparation at least six months (recommended twelve months) before your desired date. At least an introductory interview must be completed before a date can be set.

**Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, first Holy Communion) for children 8 and over, or for adults:** Contact the parish office.

## PASTORAL CARE

**Entering the Church:** If you are new to the Catholic faith and interested in learning more about the church or about entering the church, welcome! Contact the parish office for a meeting with Father Alfred or Deacon Michael.

**Communion to the Homebound:** If you or a family member are, or are going to be, homebound, whether at home or in a care facility, please notify the parish office. Medical and care facilities are unable to inform us of their Catholic residents and patients. We would be happy to arrange to visit and bring you Holy Communion. Please contact the parish office for arrangements.

**Declarations of Nullity:** In some cases, a man or a woman desires healing through a declaration by a Church tribunal (a Catholic Church court), which does not deny that a relationship existed, but simply states that the relationship was missing something that the Church requires for a valid marriage, falling short of at least one of the essential elements required for a binding union. (Commonly called an 'annulment.')

Advocates are available for those needing assistance with declarations of nullity. Call the parish office to set up an appointment.

**My Parish Prayer** Almighty God, My parish is composed of people like me. I help make it what it is. It will be friendly if I am. It will be holy if I am. Its pews will be filled if I help fill them. It will do great work if I work. It will be prayerful if I pray. It will make generous gifts to many causes if I am a generous giver. It will bring other people into its worship if I invite and bring them. It will be a parish family of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, and of compassion, charity, and mercy if I - who make it what it is - am filled with these same qualities. Therefore, with the help of God, I will dedicate myself to the task of being all the things I want my parish to be. Bless my journey Lord God, that I might follow Jesus and build the Church for your glory. Amen.



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