

Spotlight on Fr. Russell Bergman

by Marge Rizzo

Rev. Russell Bergman has been named Parochial Vicar for the Tri-Parish communities of Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Grace and St. Joseph's. As such he will be enhancing his parish skills in preparation for becoming a pastor. Fr. Russ comes to this assignment with a variety of experiences that give him a solid foundation for the parish life.



Fr. Russ with his father and brother June 19, 2022

Fr. Russ grew up in Burnt Hills with his parents and brother. They were communicants of Our Lady of Grace Church. He attended Stevens Elementary, the Middle School and graduated from Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High School. He went on to study at SUNY Oswego where he majored in German and minored in philosophy leaving after three semesters because of illness. He resumed his studies at SUNY Albany where philosophy became his major. While he was a student at Albany, he worked as an orderly at St. Clare's Hospital.

After graduation, he began a career in injury claims for an insurance company. He worked in various positions in the insurance industry for twenty-four years. When he was laid off by the first insurance company shortly after purchasing



Hiking at Mt. Tremper November 2022

a house, he began to rethink his life goals. He decided something was lacking, and pursued a vocation, not to the priesthood, but to marriage. Not long after he met a wonderful woman and was married two years later. It turned out his call to marriage was only for a time, and his marriage ended amicably after ten and a half years.

As the marriage was dissolving, he remembered a bargain he had made privately with God, that if anything happened to his wife, he would reconsider the priesthood. Separation and divorce were not what he had in mind, but the Holy Spirit helped lead him back to revisit a priestly vocation. He first thought of the priesthood in his mid-teens during confirmation preparation under the direction of Fr. Joe Busch. As a college student, he did not go to church for the first six weeks but then started going to Mass, joined the Newman Club and became a Eucharistic minister. During the time he was married, his wife had mentioned the permanent diaconate to him on several occasions. This suggestion was also made by his father and a friend. The Holy Spirit was laying the foundation for ordination even during his marriage.

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Laying on of Hands by the Bishop at his Priestly Ordination

From the fall of 2018, while going through mediation for the divorce and church annulment, Fr. Russ attended the House of Discernment weekly for Mass, dinners and discussions of Church documents with other men contemplating the priesthood. In February, 2018, he submitted his application for the priesthood to the vocations board in the diocese; he was accepted to the priesthood in March. Subsequently

he attended Pope John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Massachusetts, which is designed for men over 35 years of age who have had prior careers. Already having a degree in philosophy, Fr. Russ studied theology there for four years and was ordained in June, 2022. He was assigned to St. Pius X Church in Loudonville before joining us.

Fr. Russ believes that everyone has a vocation, the single life, marriage, or religious life. His advice for a young man contemplating the priesthood is to move forward, to ask questions of someone to whom he can talk in confidence.

Living in the rectory of Immaculate Conception, Fr. Russ begins a typical day with a holy hour of praying, saying the Rosary, reading often during a long walk. He says daily Mass, attends meetings, teaches about the faith, meets with parishioners, celebrates baptisms and funerals, visits and administers the sacrament of the sick, and completes administrative duties. He tries to save some time for reflection and the preparation of his weekly homily which he likes to start early in the week to give it time to develop.

Fr. Russ likes the variety of parish life, especially the connection with people in the good and difficult times in their lives. He recognizes that it is also challenging to be at your best and give people what they need, particularly in their hard times. He sees the



Fr. Russ with his Seminary brothers at the March for Life

2022

church as having an important role in the community to do good while preserving the dignity of those being helped.

To relax, Fr. Russ enjoys hiking, nature, photography, concerts, and quiet time. On his bucket list are trips to Rome and to all the fifty states. He has already seen more than twenty.

When asked what one thing he would want parishioners to know about him, he said that he is a “regular guy,” with many life lessons learned that most people could relate to. With his empathy, wisdom, and real-life experiences, we are certainly lucky to have Fr. Russ among us.

New York State 2024 Legislative Session Round-Up – Respect Life Ministry Update

by Larry Smith

Respect for life from conception to natural death is a tenet of our Catholic faith. Your parish Respect Life Ministry strives to help parishioners educate themselves on respect life issues.

The New York State Catholic Conference supports or opposes legislation based on Catholic values. The Conference reports the following pro-life wins from the latest session ending June 8:

Physician Assisted Suicide – S2445-C (Hoylman-Sigal)/A995-C (Paulin)

“Defeating the Assisted Suicide legislation remained our top priority this year. Our opponents seemed to have more momentum than ever. The Medical Society of the State of New York, the New York State Academy of Family Physicians and the New York State Council of Churches have all backed the bill in recent months. However, our efforts and your advocacy led to the bill stalling once again. There remains a great discomfort with the bill among key lawmakers, and we will continue to build on that opposition when it is inevitably reintroduced next session.”

Prohibited Hospital Interference with Patient Care – S6616-A (May)/A5297-A (Paulin)

“This bill would purportedly prohibit hospital interference with patient care where the practitioner is acting in good faith and within their scope of practice. However, it is a clear violation of the rights of Catholic hospitals and another attempt to harass them. The bill is incredibly broad and could serve to mandate that all hospitals permit abortion on demand for any reason. We worked closely with Catholic Health Long Island, as well as the Greater New York Hospital Association, in successfully opposing this bill. Our first amendment concerns were heard and acknowledged by the Senate Health Committee Chair, and the bill died in that committee. Though it seemed to be moving in the Assembly, our opposition was heard, and it stalled on the Assembly floor.”

Fertilized Ovum or Embryo Outside of Uterus not Considered Human Being – S8682 (Martins)/A9412 (Curran)

“This legislation was introduced as a response to the Alabama Supreme Court’s holding which seemed to jeopardize in vitro fertilization in that state. It provides that any fertilized human ovum or human embryo existing outside of a human uterus shall not be considered an unborn child or human being. We opposed this bill for the political statement that it is, and it died in committee in both houses.”

Maternal Health Care and Birthing Standards Workgroup – S7702-A (Webb)/A8207-A (Clark)

“This bill would require that New York State convene a workgroup to study, evaluate and make recommendations related to the development of maternal care and birthing standards to ensure that patients receive the highest quality of care. The legislation would support our mission to Walk with Moms in Need, and we enthusiastically supported it. The bill passed both houses, and we will communicate our support to the Governor when it is delivered to her desk to be signed.”

Reference: <https://www.nyscatholic.org/posts/2024-end>

Meditation on the Eucharist by Rosemary Przybycien

How many of us, as children, were urged to eat our vegetables and finish our meat dish? To eat healthy? Why were our parents so consistent in trying to provide milk and juice and healthy foods as well as some fun snacks? Probably a more common reason is, as the old saying goes, "You are what you eat".

At the Last Supper, Jesus wished to eat with his closest friends - the Apostles. A Passover Meal, a symbolic meal of remembrance of those who had prepared for their passage to the Promised Land, long ago. They remembered the lambs that were slain in their stead, and from which their blood was smeared on the door lintel, telling the Angel of Death to forego that faithful household. Thus, a lamb was slain and was the center of the meal. They might also have remembered how a ram was slain by Abraham, instead of his beloved son, Isaac.

While they were at Supper, Jesus took unleavened bread and a cup of wine and gave it to His disciples and said, "Take and eat, this is My Body. Take and drink, this is My Blood." They each partook in the sharing of the Bread and Wine. He instructed them to continue in remembrance of Him. Jesus told them His Flesh was real food and His Blood was true drink.

As we contemplate these words there is a life-giving realization. Just as the meat and vegetables we eat are transformed into the cells of our body and become our muscle and bone and flesh, blood and organs, from the time our parents first fed us, so too, the Body and Blood of Jesus, under the appearance of bread and wine, transforms us within. Christ

wants to live His Love in us, through us and with us through our everyday words and deeds.



JESUS wants us to realize HE IS AS CLOSE TO US AS WE ARE TO OURSELVES. And as we live in Him, through Him and with Him, we glorify the Lord. He is not out there, somewhere, and occasionally looks in on us. In partaking of the Bread and Wine, we commit to being an honorable vessel of His Presence in the world.

Do we recognize what a bond we have with each other as we share the same Cup and Spirit? Do we realize, as we receive, that together, we are connected in the Lord. He is Lord of the living and the dead. Therefore, we are one in spirit, not only with the Body of Christ on Earth, but with our beloved who have died before us.

(**ICor:27** - "All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.") When we look with God's Love at anyone, we can be more conscious of supporting their faith, to encourage the spirit of Love within them to be manifested more fully. Our inner desire becomes, ever more fully, to remember Jesus' great commandment: "Love God and love your neighbor as I have loved you."

We embrace the Lord, ask Him to cleanse our hearts and pray that He strengthens us to live in His holy will and that we never be parted from Him.

Eucharistic Procession

The Eucharistic Procession was held at St. Joseph's on June 2.

Photos by Freckles Photography, Paul Fanning and Maria Yorkshire



Celebrations, Continued from previous page.

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★ The Crowning of Mary was held on May 12 at ★
★ Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Grace, ★
★ and St. Joseph's ★
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Times of Joy—Sacramental Milestones



Congratulations and welcome to these children who received the Sacrament of Baptism from January 9, 2024 to July 10, 2024. We pray for the grace these families need to grow in their faith.

Luke Everett Coons, child of Joseph & Pamela

Thomas Victor Contini, child of Robert & Adrienne

Evelyn Jane Belles, child of Mark & Amanda

Rowen Matthew Hayduk, child of Justin & Katherine

Summer Mary-Lou Dermody, child of Ryan & Hannah

Boden James Danton and Larkin Jean Danton, children of Matthew & Amy

Richard Paul Burke, child of Richard & Anna

Melody Beatrice Traver, Abby Marie Traver, and Maisey Eileen Traver, children of Adam & Michelle

Jaxson Christopher Meza, child of Christopher & Ashley

Hunter Charles Helo, child of Dylan & Mayah

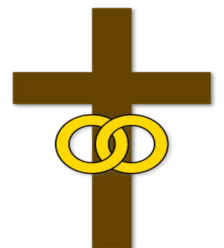
Clara Mary Flores, child of Jordan & Erin

Thomas James Nelson, child of Nicholas & Caroline

Dawson Leith Loffred0-Dempsey, child of Corey & Bethany



These couples were married betw January 9, 2024 and July 10, 2024. We wish God's blessing upon them.



Meredith Miller to Christopher Alescio

Emily Lemieux to Nicholas Zeglen