“Missionary Disciples” is a publication of the Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks that serves northern and western Alaska. Its purpose is to provide a regular opportunity for all ministries throughout the Diocese to share information so our tremendous diversity may enrich our common mission of service to the people of our Diocese.

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Cover photo: Newly ordained Deacon Dominic Hunt with his wife Lala, children, and grandchildren.

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WWW

WWW
The Synod:
What is it, Why does it Matter, and How do I get Involved?

WHAT: In its present form, the Synod of Bishops was established by Pope St. Paul VI urging greater involvement of the bishops with the Pope in matters that concern the universal Church. In October, Pope Francis invited not just the bishops, but the entire Church into the synodal process through a sharing of prayer, dialogue, and discernment that is attentive to the Holy Spirit and engaging all the faithful as responsible missionary disciples of Christ. The aim of the synod is to gather together as the faithful to hear as many voices in the Catholic Church as possible to guide us forward. Pope Francis states, “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium. What the Lord is asking of us is already in some sense present in the very word ‘synod.’ [That is], Journeying Together.”

WHY: This is a most unique opportunity for us to join in prayer as we are called to share the movement of the Holy Spirit in our individual lives, families and parishes within the long-standing Tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. This is a time in the history of the Church that Pope Francis sees the Holy Spirit calling us to turn more deeply to Christ as a source of strength to grow in our vocational call to holiness. By participating, you are taking part in a long-standing tradition within the Catholic Church. Just as the early Church could not grow without the voices of the faithful, so too is it true that today that same Church cannot grow without the voices of the faithful. Your contribution to this process, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is crucial in this journeying together. We encourage you to keep your heart and mind open to whatever direction the Holy Spirit leads the Church as this journey continues through the different levels. Your willingness to say “yes” to Christ in this time of prayer does not go unnoticed.

HOW: Participating is easy. To quickly answer the questions, follow the link https://bit.ly/DioceseFairbanksSodalityForm and prayerfully answer the questions provided. Or, see the attached copy of the questions, fill them out and mail your hard copy to Ben Colwell at 1316 Peger Road Fairbanks, AK 99709 by January 1, 2022. Questions can be answered individually or as a group. ~ Ben Colwell

Prayer for Reflection
We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts.

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it. We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.
Synod Questions

1. We are being called to become a church where everyone is journeying together, meaning we listen to one another, plan together, and work together. How is this happening already in our church? How can we do better?

2. What would make your experience of your local church community better?

3. Jesus Christ calls us, the church, to live out the Good News (Gospel) by showing God’s love to all people. How are we doing this in our community? How are we failing to do this in our community? What might be keeping us from this mission?

4. What are ways your local church allows for you to participate? Do you participate, if yes, how and why? If no, what are some ways you’d like to participate and why?

5. To “journey together” in our church communities requires some change from the way we now do things…some new learnings…and on-going learning. Are we ready to do this? What will help us do this?

6. As we ask the Holy Spirit to help us in our praying, reflecting, and discussing, is there anything else you feel called to share that might help us to journey together as church?
While the most recent synod has caused a lot of Catholics to sit up and take notice, the synodal process actually has a long history within the Church and is a relatively frequent occurrence. In fact, the last synod took place just a few years ago.

The 2018 Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment took place after a year-long discernment period. In 2017, the bishops disseminated a list of questions to young people about their relationship with God and the Church. Additionally, a presynodal meeting of 300 young people from around the world was held in March 2018. Feedback was gathered, distilled, and then sent on to the Vatican, which responded with a lengthy reflection that can be read in its entirety at: https://bit.ly/3FyNsbe

Just as it is now, the Diocese of Fairbanks participated in the last synodal process. The Chancery disseminated questions to faith leaders in the Bush, who forwarded them to parishes and encouraged discussions with youth and young adults. In Fairbanks, Fr. Robert Fath devoted an evening of Feast & Faith to the process, and about 30 young adults participated. He then distilled feedback from road system and Bush parishes and forwarded salient points to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The USCCB then gathered reflections from all U.S. dioceses, which it distilled and forwarded to the Vatican to represent young American Catholics.

The challenge of any synod is that the Church is soliciting feedback from the global Body of Christ and issues pertinent to one region may be irrelevant for another. For example, the last synod survey included questions...
about inner-city gang activity, which obviously isn’t an issue for Catholic Alaskans. For the Diocese of Fairbanks, the vastness of the diocese posed a more pressing logistical challenge, as the chancery tried to gather reflections from dozens of remote parishes across thousands of miles.

According to Fr. Robert, young Catholics in Alaska shared during the last synodal process that they need more support from the Church to stay connected to their faith: “Parishes tend to have youth programs and family-oriented ministries, but there’s often little to nothing available for young adults.” Yet this is a critical period for young Catholics when they arguably need support the most, explains Fr. Robert. “Those in their 20s are just becoming independent for the first time and there’s a tendency to drift away from faith because there’s no longer the expectation or encouragement from family to go to Mass or pray.” In Alaska especially, single young adults are often separated from extended family in the lower 48 states, making it even more critical that the Church embraces them as they begin to make the faith their own.

The Church’s formal response to the synod for young Catholics in 2018 reflects that true spirit of listening, discernment, and response that is at the heart of every synodal process, including the current one. In that document’s conclusion, the concerns of young people are acknowledged, with a call to the whole Body of Christ to provide them with the authentic witness to the Gospel they need and deserve to persevere in faith: “We must be saints so we can invite the young to be saints. The young are crying out for an authentic, radiant, transparent, joyful Church: only a Church of saints can measure up to such requests! Many of the young have left the Church because they have not found in it holiness, but rather mediocrity, presumption, division, and corruption. Unfortunately, the world is outraged by the abuses of some people in the Church rather than being invigorated by the holiness of her members: hence the Church in her entirety must embrace a decisive, immediate, and radical change of perspective! The young need saints who can form other saints, thus showing that ‘holiness is the most attractive face of the Church’ (Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate, 9). There is a language that all men and women of every age, place, and culture can understand, because it is immediate and radiant: it is the language of holiness.”

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**Faith and Family Formation**

*by Ben Colwell, Director of the Office of Faith and Family Formation*

**Diocesan Advent Faith Challenge: Praying and Preparing for Christmas**

Advent begins November 28, and The Faith and Family Formation office has just what you need to pray and prepare for the season. During the Advent season, all households, single or large in numbers, are encouraged to participate in the challenge. Everyone who participates will be eligible for a raffle in order to win a decorative nativity set! All you have to do is send in your checklist of completed challenges (every completed challenge counts as an entry.) The Advent Challenge can be found in this letter as well as on the Diocese of Fairbanks website and Social Media pages.
Advent is a time of preparation and prayer. To help in your preparation and prayer, the office of Faith and Family Formation has put together an Advent Challenge. This challenge is encouraged to be done with your household whether you are a house of one or a house of many. Each week there are various tasks you can complete and check off. For every item you check off each week and submit your final checklist to Benjamin Colwell, the director of Faith and Family Formation at the end of Advent, you will be entered into a raffle to receive a small decorative nativity set for your home for each checked task! Checklists can be emailed to becolwell@cbna.org or mailed to 1316 Peger Road Fairbanks, AK 99709. God bless and happy prepping!

WEEK ONE (Nov 28-Dec 4)

- Pray before a meal
  “Bless us Oh Lord, and these Your gifts, which we are about to receive from Your bounty through Christ our Lord, Amen.”
- Pray an Our Father once a day
- Pray a Hail Mary once a day
- Pray a Glory Be once a day
- Invite one person to pray with you
- Share with someone something you are thankful for, and ask them to share something they are thankful for at least two times this week
- Pray for someone at least two times this week
- Read the Gospel for the first Sunday (Luke Chapter 21 Verses 25-36). Ask yourself how your heart may be drowsy, and what you may do to prevent your heart's drowsiness
- Attend Mass or Eucharistic Service

WEEK TWO (Dec 5-11)

- Pray before three meals “Bless us Oh Lord, and these Your gifts, which we are about to receive from Your bounty through Christ our Lord, Amen.”
- Pray after a meal “We give You thanks, for all the good that comes from this meal, Oh Lord, who feeds us, Amen”
- Pray an Our Father once a day
- Pray a Hail Mary once a day
- Pray a Glory Be once a day
- Invite three people to pray with you this week
- Ask a family member why faith is important to them
- Pray the Rosary once this week (1 Our Father Followed by 10 Hail Mary and 1 Glory Be. Repeat 5 times)
- Read the Psalm for the second Sunday of Advent (Psalm 126)
- Read the Gospel for the second Sunday of Advent (Luke Chapter 3 Verses 1-6) Reflect on your family and the ancestry you come from and how that ancestry has shaped your faith
- Attend Mass or Eucharistic Service
WEEK THREE (Dec 12-18)

☐ Pray before every meal “Bless us Oh Lord, and these Your gifts, which we are about to receive from Your bounty through Christ Our Lord, Amen.”

☐ Pray after three meals “We give You thanks, for all the good that comes from this meal, Oh Lord, Who feeds us, Amen.”

☐ Pray and Our Father once a day

☐ Pray A Hail Mary once a day

☐ Pray a Glory Be once a day

☐ Invite three people to pray with you this week

☐ Sit in silence twice this week for a half hour inviting God to just be with you

☐ Pray the Rosary three times this week (1 Our Father Followed by 10 Hail Mary and 1 Glory Be. Repeat 5 times)

☐ Pray before going to sleep every night this week.

☐ Ask three people how you can pray for them, and then pray for them

☐ Ask a friend why their faith is important to them

☐ Openly discuss faith at least once with your household (why do you pray, what do you like about prayer, how is God working in your life)

☐ Read the Psalm for the third Sunday of Advent (Isaiah Chapter 12, verses 2-6)

☐ Read the First Reading for the third Sunday of Advent (Zephaniah Chapter 3 Verses 14-18)

☐ Read the Gospel for the third Sunday of Advent (Luke Chapter 3 Verses 10-18) Reflect on how John the Baptist points his followers to Jesus and reflect upon how you are leading others to Jesus.

☐ Attend Mass or a Eucharistic Service

WEEK FOUR (Dec 19-25)

☐ Pray before every meal “Bless us Oh Lord, and these Your gifts, which we are about to receive from Your bounty through Christ Our Lord, Amen.”

☐ Pray after every meal “We give you thanks, for all the good that comes from this meal, Oh Lord, Who feeds us, Amen.”

☐ Pray the Rosary every day this week (1 Our Father Followed by 10 Hail Mary and 1 Glory Be. Repeat 5 times)

☐ Invite five people to pray with you this week

☐ Ask three people how you can pray for them and pray for them

☐ Openly discuss faith with your household at least two times this week

☐ Pray before going to sleep every day this week

☐ Pray when you wake up every day this week “Thank you, God for this day. Help me seek You always, and continue to use the gifts you have given me to serve You today”

☐ Pray for the deceased “May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.”

☐ Spend at least one hour talking with a member of your family three times this week

☐ Pray with a saint asking for them to take your prayers to God. (Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Saint John Paul II, Saint Francis, or any other saints)

☐ Read the First Reading for the fourth Sunday of Advent (Micah Chapter 5 Verses 1-4)

☐ Read the Psalm for the fourth Sunday of Advent (Psalm 80)

☐ Read the Second Reading for the fourth Sunday of Advent (Hebrews Chapter 10 Verses 5-10)

☐ Read the Gospel for the fourth Sunday of Advent (Luke Chapter 1 Verses 39-45) Reflect upon the role of Mary within your faith, do you turn to her to help you get closer to Jesus?

☐ Attend Mass or a Eucharistic Service
Staff Update

With the lifting of the European travel ban for fully vaccinated travelers, the Diocese is looking forward to the return of Fr. Szymon. The Chancery is working to bring two polish priests for temporary assignment to the Diocese. We are sad to say that Fr. Mark Hoelsken, S.J., will be leaving the Diocese. Fr. Mark has served the Diocese several times, first as a Jesuit volunteer in the 1970’s and then again as a priest. We wish Fr. Mark the best in his next endeavor.

Planned Ordination to the Priesthood

Dcns. Piotr Oprych and Dominik Wojcik are scheduled for ordination on Wednesday, January 12 at 10:00 AM at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Fairbanks, AK. This will be the first time in diocesan history that we will have a double ordination. If you are in Fairbanks, please plan to attend. For those who cannot attend the Diocese will be able to live-stream the ordination.

Pray with Pope Francis

Each year the Holy Father asks for our prayers for a specific intention each month. You are invited to answer the Holy Father’s request and to join with many people worldwide in praying for this intention each month. From time to time, the Holy Father may add a second prayer intention related to current events or urgent needs, like disaster relief. The second prayer request will help mobilize prayer and action related to the urgent situation.

December
Catechists: Let us pray for the catechists, summoned to announce the Word of God: may they be its witnesses, with courage and creativity and in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Construction progress continues on the new St. Catherine of Sienna Church in Chefornak. This $3.9 million project is scheduled to be completed in April 2022, with the dedication scheduled for August 2022. This project will provide Chefornak with their own dedicated church structure for the first time in 17 years after a fire destroyed the previous church.

This project includes a new 660 sq. ft. rectory for the visiting priest and a modern, 4,000 sq. ft. church. This project will be the first new construction church since 2003, when Stebbins and St. Michael’s churches were built. ~ Jacob Baugh
Koyukuk Construction

After more than a year’s delay in moving the old St. Patrick’s Church, construction on the new church in Koyukuk has begun. Congdon Construction completed the Triodetic foundation for the new church this fall. The remainder of the construction will be conducted with the assistance of the Fairbanks Knights of Columbus and other volunteer groups.

The new 1,750 sq. ft. building will include a 750 sq. ft. rectory apartment and 762 sq. ft. church, replacing the 612 sq. ft. former generator enclosure that had been in service as a church. ~ Jacob Baugh
Deacon Ordination
of Dominic Hunt

an interview of Dominic and Lala Hunt by David Schienle

Dcn. Dominic and his wife Lala with Bishop Chad Zielinski and Fr. Stan Jaszek.

As the American Catholic Bishops were about to decline the option of reestablishing the diaconate after the Second Vatican Council, American Bishops reversed course. The Rural Deacon program was created in 1967; however, unlike other dioceses in the United States,
the deacon program was created to ordain Yup’ik men who could become a bridge between Yup’ik culture and Catholic traditions. In 1975 the first deacon was ordained for the Diocese of Fairbanks. Last September, Dominic Hunt was ordained at Sacred Heart Parish in Emmonak, joining the diaconate established 46 years ago.

Dominic shared that he turned down Sacred Heart parish council’s invitation for him to consider becoming a deacon candidate several times. He eventually accepted the invitation through prayer with his family and friends, encouragement from the deacons, and seeing the needs of Emmonak and surrounding villages. Dominic’s wife, Lala explained that they had been doing music ministry for years: “We are very much involved with the church in that respect, and then I have served in other ways, like the regional pastoral council and the diocesan council.” She was able to see the needs of the Y-K region and other regions around the Diocese. Lala saw the limited number of priests and the limited number of deacons. That the deacons were getting older and needed help, she said, “My job was to encourage Dom, and we prayed.”

Just like so many who have stepped up to a role in the Church, there are people in the background gently encouraging them. Dominic and Lala gave special credit to Pat Tam who: “guided us in a quiet, humble way. He is a very spiritual man. He recognizes that in the Yup’ik people. He was gently showing the way. With Pat involved in our lives, with his guidance and just watching him, nurturing the kids and the grand kids, in a way we owe a lot to Pat, so we had to do something.”

As a deacon candidate, Dominic would participate in deacon training classes, Native Ministry Training Program workshops and join in with the deacon retreats. As part of the process, he was installed as a lector, reading at services and Mass, and then he was installed as an acolyte assisting at the altar. He would learn all aspects of the deacon ministry.
Dominic talked about the role of a deacon in the villages in that they represent the people. As a deacon they carry, they provide spiritual help, guidance, keeping the spirit alive in the community.

Dominic spoke that there are Baptisms, visiting the sick, and doing the Eucharistic services. It is not just one thing. There is a lot of spiritual need in the community. It is always growing. It is all continual life. Like a life cycle; there are people being born, people looking for help, and people getting married. There are people with something on their minds, they have people like deacons and priests to turn toward. Dominic said, “We don’t have all the time, the priests, the sisters, psychologist providing these services in the villages; I think it helps to have the deacons, Eucharistic Ministers, and people in the faith to step up and help people who are in need, wether the needs are physical or spiritual.”

It must not be forgotten that there is a second person deeply involved in the life of a deacon, and that is the deacon’s wife. Lala spoke about recently seeing her husband assisting Bishop Chad Zielinski at Sacred Heart Cathedral: “The Word comes alive and meaningful when our deacons deliver homilies that come from the heart, resonating our way of life. We are encouraged to live out our traditional values, and when we do we are one with God and the Word is active. The Native community is in need of more leaders in the Church. It’s inspiring to see our people taking part in the celebration of the Mass as today when Dominic was serving. We belong in the Church, and we should celebrate because we are God’s people.”

Pat Tam talked about the need for Yup’ik deacons, “Our parish shares one priest with three other villages, so the deacons are vital ministers who lead Sunday services, baptize children, witness marriages, and conduct funerals. As Yup’ik deacons, they do the groundwork of enculturating the Gospel for their people. Yup’ik deacons draw out connections between Catholic teachings and Yup’ik traditions and practices. But
they themselves also embody what it means to be Yup’ik Catholic.” Pat Tam continued about Dominic and Lala, “they are real gifts to their people. They minister as a couple, for example, reflecting on the readings and preparing a Sunday homily. They use their different skills to reach out to those who need to hear the Good News. They show how the Gospel can be lived out in Yup’ik married life.”

During the ordination Mass, Bishop Chad Zielinski said in his homily, “Dominic’s ‘yes’ to Jesus throughout his life, with his wife, with his children and now uniquely as a deacon through his promises to continue to serve his family as husband and father, and the family of God as a man, uniquely consecrated for diaconal ministry, met in a Holy fire that has always been ignited in his heart as I called down the Holy Spirit.” The Diocese looks forward to the next Yup’ik man who accepts the call to become a deacon bringing his rich culture and gifts of the Holy Spirit to their village, community, and Diocese keeping the spirit alive.

The following week Dcn. Dominic Hunt joins Dcns. Raymond Waska and Phillip Yupanik with Bishop Chad Zielinski and Fr. Stan Jaszek at Sacred Heart Parish in Emmonak, AK.
OUR CALLING

CREATING SAFE SPACES

Safe Environment Office
1316 Peger Rd
Fairbanks, AK 99709
amenard@cbna.org
907-374-9553

SPEAK WITH CHILDREN!

The topic of child abuse should be approached as any other safety concern. Even though we don’t demonstrate to children that fire is dangerous, we talk about it. It is important to regularly assure children that they will never be blamed for something that happens to them.
SAFE SPACES

WE PLEDGE TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH. ASSESS THE BUILDINGS AND THE SACRED SPACES IN WHICH WE GATHER. CONSIDER:

- IDENTIFY SECLUDED AREAS AND LOCK EMPTY ROOMS
- DO NOT PERMIT CHILDREN TO ENTER STAFF-ONLY AREAS.
- SUPERVISING STAFF SHOULD CHECK BATHROOMS BEFORE SENDING CHILDREN IN ALONE.
- MEET WITH CHILDREN IN ROOMS WITH WINDOWS OR OPEN DOORS.
- FOLLOW THE “RULE OF THREE.” ONE ADULTS IS NOT ALONE WITH ONE CHILD
- ALLOW PARENTS TO DROP IN ON ALL PROGRAMS
- REVIEW AND FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES IN THE CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT.

ESTABLISH SAFETY RULES

SAFETY RULES SHOULD BE FOLLOWED AT ALL TIMES. CONSIDER:

- CHECK FIRST – CHILDREN SHOULD ALWAYS CHECK WITH A PARENT BEFORE ACCEPTING GIFTS, CHANGING PLANS, OR LEAVING WITH A FRIEND.
- BUDDY SYSTEM – ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO HAVE AT LEAST ONE FRIEND THEY LOOK OUT FOR AND WHO LOOKS OUT FOR THEM.
- TRUST YOUR GUT – IF A CHILD FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE IN A SITUATION OR WITH AN INDIVIDUAL, THEY SHOULD LET A TRUSTED ADULT KNOW.
- BE LOUD – ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO CATCH THE ATTENTION OF ANOTHER ADULT BECAUSE MOST WANT TO HELP.
Fr. Stan Jaszek Awarded
Lumen Christi Award

Fr. Stan Jaszek received the Lumen Christi Award from Fr. Jack Wall, President of Catholic Extension.

On November 3rd, Fr. Stan Jaszek was officially awarded the Catholic Extension 2021-2022 Lumen Christ Award for his missionary life and ministry on the edge of the world.

In his acceptance speech, Fr. Stan shared that we need to remember the main focus when we celebrate such awards; it is not the one who reflects the light but the one who is the source of the light. Jesus Christ very clearly said that without Him we cannot do anything.” Fr. Stan spoke about all the ministers in the Diocese, explaining that Lumen Christi means the Light of Christ. If you split white light with a prism, you will see a rainbow of colors that make up the white light. That white light is made up of so many colors we cannot see them all. “It reminds us that this award is not my achievement; it acknowledges all the work in the past and all who are currently involved in ministry within the Diocese of Fairbanks.”

To watch the video go to: https://bit.ly/30zKdRu

~ David Schienle