“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 Fr. Piotr Oprych and Fr. Dominik Wojcik with Bishop Chad Zielinski and Vocation Director Fr. Robert Fath.
Last summer, Bishop Zielinski spent a week visiting parishes along the middle portion of the mighty Yukon River. The arduous 300-mile boat trip through overnight sunshine, driving wind, and at times, bone-chilling rain highlighted the unique experience of sharing the Gospel in our remote Alaskan villages. Bishop Chad also witnessed the ongoing resilience of our Athabaskan Catholics, who remain faithful despite the hardship of low salmon runs, which has historically provided their families with a significant portion of the food they need for the year.
Thursday, July 1: Arriving in Nulato

I arrived in the village of Nulato at 3pm and was greeted by Bro. Bob Ruzicka, OFM, the diocese’s Interior Region Coordinator, along with Fr. Thinh Van Tran, OFM, and Bro. John Nuesser, OFM. Brother John is still in formation with the Franciscans, and was spending two months in the interior as his mission experience.

For years, I’ve traveled to our Middle Yukon parishes around this time for a pastoral visit. Normally, early July is the peak of the salmon run, but the numbers of king, chum, and coho salmon were at their lowest levels on record. This signals a troubled ecosystem likely impacted by overfishing and climate changes. Chum salmon numbers were dangerously low: Fish & Game projected around 99,000 fish this year compared to a historical run of 870,000. This prompted the state to ban commercial and subsistence fishing.

It’s difficult for people outside of Alaska to appreciate what a salmon fishing ban means for our Native families. Villages are isolated with just a few hundred residents. In western Alaska, one in five people are unemployed, and 39% live below the poverty line. The high cost of transporting items into these remote areas means food in village markets tends to be exorbitant, with perishables like milk, bread, and vegetables costing three to four times what they do in urban areas.

For families that live off the land, not being able to stock their larders with fish means they’ll need to spend even more at the grocery store making hard decisions about prioritizing food, medicine, and heating oil to survive winter. In true Alaskan style, commercial fishermen from Bristol Bay have been donating sockeye salmon to many villages along the Yukon River to compensate for the low salmon runs.

Word around the village was that sheefish were running, so after Mass, I traveled to the Nulato River with Fr. Thinh, Bro. John, and a villager named Neil to give it our best. For the first hour or so, we caught nothing. Then Neil caught a sheefish, and the bite was on. We ended up with 10 fish before heading back to the village late that evening with our haul.

Friday, July 2: Another Day in Nulato

I was up early to greet the daylight, which wasn’t hard because it doesn’t really get dark outside at this time of year. (Fairbanks residents celebrate the constant daylight every June with the annual “Midnight Sun Run,” a 10K that starts at 10pm) By early July, there are a few hours of dusk but even then, it’s so bright you can...
sit outside and comfortably read a book. However, once past the summer equinox, the light starts waning and we lose about seven minutes of daylight each day until the winter solstice in late December. Then we start gaining daylight again. It’s part of the unique beauty of living so far north.

For Alaskans who endure the long darkness of an arctic winter, there’s no joy like our long summer days. One of my favorite summer experiences is to rise early and greet the day with a nice hot cup of strong coffee while praying the Liturgy of the Hours. As I was praying this morning, I realized that priests, religious, and lay faithful from around the world were joining me in praying the official prayer for the Church, each in their own language. What a joyful and holy dialogue with God throughout the Mystical Body of Christ! The first parish in Alaska was established in Nulato. It’s beautiful to think that the Liturgy of the Hours has been prayed here continuously since the late 1800s.

Next to the current church and residence is an old convent that used to house the nuns who served in one of the earlier missions. The chancery archives contain beautiful pictures of these sisters dressed in full black habits overlain with fur-lined parkas. The convent is now called “Bishop’s Attic,” and villagers have turned it into a clothing closet where locals donate gently used clothing that is available to anyone who stops by. It’s a great outreach ministry that also solves the problem of what to do with outgrown clothing that can’t be easily hauled away from the community.

After prayers, Fr. Thinh and I returned to the Nulato River for another try at the sheefish. We caught five more, and upon our return, Bro. Bob quickly processed all 15 with his handy fillet knife. For breakfast, we had freshly fried sheefish and sheefish eggs, which were scrumptious. Sheefish are the largest whitefish in Alaskan rivers and can grow up to 60 pounds, though those caught in interior rivers tend to be much smaller.

The meat is white and flaky, with a succulent, clean taste like cod or halibut. It’s considered such a delicacy that some Alaskans refer to sheefish as “the lobster of the north” and fish for it all year round.

Saturday, July 3: Heading to Ruby

Bro. Bob, Fr. Thinh, Bro. John, and I loaded up early this morning on the parish boat, en route to the village of Ruby about 100 miles upriver. The sturdy, open-bowed Hewescraft 200 had been built for the parish by the Hewescraft Corporation. The company has built several boats for the villages in need over the past few decades and they have served us well. This “pickup truck of the Yukon” easily accommodated the four of us plus all our gear.

On the way to Ruby, we passed Bishop’s Rock. Located at a sharp bend in the Yukon River, the steep rock formation juts out of the landscape like a spear, and the spot is notorious for its ice jams that cause flooding upriver during spring breakup. The rock was named for Bishop Charles Seghers, a Belgian missionary who was murdered by his guide on his way to fulfill a promise he’d made eight years earlier to the people of Nulato, to return and establish a permanent mission in their midst. Today, the spot still sports a white cross reminding us all of the
ultimate price some pay to share the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Gospel.

We took a short break about two hours upriver and alighted at the village of Galena. We visited briefly with Bro. Justin Huber, our third Franciscan who serves the interior region. A quiet, humble man, Bro. Justin has spent nearly 20 years in Alaska after mission assignments in Tennessee, Texas, and Africa. In Galena, he has a reputation as someone who “gets things done,” whether that’s teaching baptism classes or fixing a boiler in 40 below zero. According to Bro. Justin, “If God puts you somewhere and there’s a job that needs to be done, you just do it.” This simple self-sacrificing worldview is common among our wonderful Franciscans.

Back on the water, it took another two hours to reach Ruby, where we were greeted by elder Harold Esmailka and Fr. Joe Hemmer, OFM. Like Bro. Justin, Harold and Fr. Joe are unassuming, humble men, but their long-standing and unwavering dedication to the faith has made them role models for Alaskan Catholics. Father Joe has spent the past 30 years of his “retirement” serving in the interior, and is a great witness to what it means to be a “warrior missionary” in an extreme environment like Alaska. He lives alone and has pastoral oversight for St. Peter in Chains in Ruby and St. Teresa’s in Kaltag.

We celebrated evening Mass, then enjoyed a covered-dish to pass. Potluck dinner consisted of moose stew, fresh sheefish, and even “muktuk” (whale skin and blubber) from a visitor from Utqiagvik, (formerly Barrow). Muktuk is a traditional Inuit food made from the skin and blubber of the bowhead whale, though beluga and narwhal can be used. It’s often eaten raw or even frozen, but the woman who brought it to the church had boiled the meat, and it...
was quite tasty. I was amused to see the ever-present macaroni and cheese on the table for those with less adventurous palates.

Tomorrow is Independence Day, and we did hear a smattering of late-night “bangs” to usher in the holiday. July 4th is a little different in Alaska than in the lower 48 states where people stay up late for spectacular fireworks displays. For us, it’s just too bright outside in July to get the full experience, so we save our big fireworks shows for New Year’s Eve.

**Sunday, July 4:**

It was a quiet morning as many folks slept in who had been up late enjoying July 4th festivities. Later this morning, I celebrated Sunday Mass and was impressed by the number of people who attended. Ruby is a smaller village, with fewer than 200 residents, but St. Peter in Chains has a dedicated group of faithful who attend Mass whenever a priest is available. Currently, Fr. Hemmer is based in Kaltag, and between his duties there and travel to Fairbanks for medical care, he’s only able to visit Ruby for about one week each month.

We departed Ruby early in the afternoon for our return trip to Nulato, intending to stop longer at Galena this time. I was invited to pilot the boat and noticed that moving with the current enabled us to travel 6-7 mph faster, with an occasional bump in speed if the wind was in our favor. Traveling the Yukon River brought back memories from growing up in Michigan. We ran boats in small lakes on the Great Lakes, whose waters could be very rough at times. Navigating the Yukon is different. For a first-timer like me, I needed the corporate

memory of the Franciscans to guide me away from hidden underwater obstacles like sandbars. This is no small feat since sandbars change locations annually in response to the current and water levels. Seasoned boaters always carry a tool kit and spare prop in case the motor gets tangled in a log or hits a rocky sandbar.

Our competent Franciscans got us to Galena without incident, of course. We arrived with time to prepare dinner, share some great stories of our adventure, and discuss the Middle Yukon Regional meeting that was to take place on Tuesday.

**Monday & Tuesday, July 5-6: A Longer Visit in Galena**

I celebrated evening Mass on Monday, then on Tuesday, we held a gathering of lay leaders from villages up and down the Middle Yukon. Most attendees were older women who have been the “keepers of the faith” for decades in their villages. They are in large part responsible for keeping our parishes going between the rare visit from a priest by serving as parish administrators, catechists, sacramental preparation leaders, and of course, Communion service presiders. They, along with our rural deacons, make profound sacrifices to ensure the Gospel remains rooted and grows in the far north, and they truly are our unsung heroes.

One highly discussed topic was recognizing the work of elders, who are cornerstones of Yup’ik, Athabaskan, and Inuit culture. Interestingly, not every senior is considered an “elder” among Alaska Natives. Elders are individuals who are not only of advanced age but who possess a wealth of cultural history and knowledge that will benefit younger generations. A role model, if you will. To honor these important community members, our group decided to plan a regional celebration in Galena next October 11 on “Indigenous People’s Day” honoring elders who have served as prayer leaders and catechists for many years.

**Wednesday, July 7: Stopping by Kaltag**

We departed Galena early since we had an almost 3-hour boat ride to the village of Kaltag ahead of us. It was rainy and despite being the height of summer, quite chilly. We decided to stop briefly at Nulato about halfway into the trip to eat lunch and have a hot cup of coffee to warm our bones. I think our lengthy river adventure along the Yukon had maxed out Bro. John’s resilience because he decided to stay in Nulato.

It took us another hour to make it to Kaltag, where we met up with Fr. Joe again. This amazing 93-year-old super trooper sat on a metal chair in his own boat, bundled up in winter coat and hat. It might sound strange to hear about someone wearing winter gear in July, but the Yukon River is only about 40 degrees Fahrenheit, even in summer. Then, the constantly-blowing wind delivers a biting cold to exposed skin.

Alaska’s lakes and rivers can be fatally cold, and the state has more than 10 times more drowning deaths than the rest of the country. The shock of the cold water is so severe that about 20% of people who fall into our waters die within minutes, and even strong swimmers start to lose muscle control quickly. Our priests have led many funerals after our frigid waters tragically claimed a village’s life. It’s especially heart wrenching when a child or teen drowns; those losses are particularly painful and the community suffers a deep spiritual wound.

Today, the ambient temperatures on the Yukon were in the mid-50s and rain was abundant. Alaskans live for their gloriously sunny summer days, but some years bring an unexpectedly cold and rainy season, and this was one of them. Shortly after tying up our boats in Kaltag, we ran inside to brew a big pot of coffee. Cold driving rain and wind were the perfect combination to create a thirst for hot brew.

We celebrated a 5:30 pm Mass with a joyful baptism of a child, then enjoyed a parish potluck dinner. Brother Bob and I checked the weather forecast and saw that it was supposed to be cold, foggy, and rainy again, so we decided to depart Kaltag that evening since the rain had subsided and the wind died down. We made the trip in under an hour. At this point, we had covered just under 300 miles on the Yukon River in five days. I was exhausted and slept well that night!

**Thursday, July 8: Departing Nulato**

I rose early this morning and confirmed out the window
that it was cold and rainy again. It was also so foggy you couldn’t see the opposite side of the river, so I knew Bro. Bob and I had made a good call about traveling back to Nulato last night. We celebrated a late morning Mass attended mostly by faithful elders, a few of whom brought grandkids.

About a month earlier, I had made an emergency trip to Nulato to officiate the funeral for a good friend, Henry “Junior” Agnes. Junior suddenly died of a suspected heart attack. He had served as a good friend and mentor to me over the years, teaching me all about navigating the Yukon and how to catch salmon with a drift net. A few years back when the salmon population was at healthier numbers, I spent time fishing with Junior and Bro. Bob and we caught 37 king salmon in just about 90 minutes. Junior was one of many kind souls who taught me about our Athabaskan brothers and sisters, and there is so much to learn I suspect I will always be climbing that curve.

Prior to my departure, I had a nice chat with Junior’s widow, Sherry. In talking with her, I was reminded of the words of Simeon in the Gospel: “And a sword will pierce your heart.” Sherry was shocked by the sudden loss of her husband, and her grief was palpable. She thanked me for making the trip to Nulato to celebrate Junior’s funeral. In my seven years as Bishop, I have officiated at many village funerals and am always amazed by the imprint those who have died make on their communities. With such close bonds, their loss is felt far beyond their immediate family members. Like so many of our Native people, Junior has left sacred footprints in my heart that I will carry with me always.
The Ordination of
Fr. Piotr Oprych
and Fr. Dominik Wojcik
The Diocese celebrated its first double ordination in its 60-year history with the ordination of Fr. Piotr Oprych and Fr. Dominik Wojcik at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Both attended SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Michigan. Fr. Piotr is assigned as the Parochial Vicar of St. Raphael Parish. Fr. Dominik is assigned as the Parochial Vicar of St. Nicholas Parish.
Piotr Oprych and Dominik Wojcik laying facedown before the altar while the Litany of Supplication is sung.

Piotr Oprych giving one of his first blessings.

Bishop Chad dripping holy chrism onto the palm of Dominik.
The Official Catholic Directory (OCD) is published annually by P.J. Kenedy & Sons in association with NRP Direct, which is why it is sometimes referred to as the Kenedy directory. Although called by different titles throughout history, this directory has been in existence for over 200 years, first established in 1817. The OCD lists all approved Catholic entities in the United States.

The Code of Canon Law specifies that no entity can call itself Catholic without the permission of the “competent ecclesiastical authority,” which for our diocese is our bishop. Therefore, any organization of the Christian faithful cannot assume the name Catholic in any part of their name without the written consent of the bishop.

The OCD is a very useful tool that I often refer to for information regarding our or other dioceses or specific questions regarding other religious organizations. But why is the OCD significant or important? To be listed as a Catholic entity in the OCD under the institution section of the diocese grants that institution tax-exempt status under the annual group exemption letter that the IRS grants the USCCB every year. Therefore, it is imperative that those who compile the information for submission into the OCD annually are responsible for vetting the accuracy of all the information.

In January each year, our diocesan data is due for submission to the OCD for inclusion in that year’s directory. Each year, I’m amazed at the amount of data requested for submission and the time it takes to input and accurately review it. In a typical diocese, each parish would be responsible for the manual input of the data, however, since we are a missionary diocese with limited internet capability within our villages, all data is input by David Schienle in our archive office and then reviewed by the Chancellor for inclusion.

What data is collected from each parish entity? A sample of some of the information requested is in the annual totals of the sacraments of baptisms, first communions, confirmations, and marriages. In addition, the estimated number of Catholic households and registered parishioners and the average weekly hours for reconciliation and adoration. Included are all employees who work at each parish and physical and mailing addresses with phone and fax numbers.

Thank you to all of you responsible for providing the accurate data for your parishes, and know that the information is a historical record of our Catholic faith in all of our 46 parishes within the Diocese of Fairbanks.

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Current Clergy & Religious Statistics

Bishop: 1
Diocesan Priests Active in Diocese: 4
Priest Active Outside Diocese: 1
Religious Priests in Diocese: 7
Priests from other Dioceses: 11
Total Priests in Diocese: 22
Permanent Deacons in Diocese: 20
Religious Brothers: 2
Religious Sisters: 1

Sacramental Statistics Fiscal for Year 2020-2021

Baptism: 195
First Communions: 8
Confirmation: 40
Marriages: 20
Deaths: 159
Catholic Population: 11,876
Total Population in Diocese: 164,025
Update from Yukon-Kuskokwim Region
by Sr. Kathy Radich, O.S.F., Regional Coordinator

Some of the staff here in the Y-K have been teleconferencing on the third Tuesday of the last four months to share the USCCB Pastoral Plan on Racism. A study book of four sessions - “open wide our hearts - the enduring call to love” - was put out by the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center. It has been good to reflect on racism not only in this region but in the state, country, and world. The booklet covers Invitation to Conversion, To Do Justice: Live in Right Relationship, To Love Goodness and To Walk Humbly with God.

Alaska COVID Surge
With the surge in infection of COVID for Alaska, many villages restarted limiting travel. With the restriction of gathering, parishes have started offering prayers and Masses on the VHF radio again.

Diocesan Archive
by David Schienle, Coordinator of Archive

With the discovery of unmarked graves at Kamloops Indian Residential School in Canada, the topic of suppression of Native culture at Catholic Boarding Schools has been revived in public awareness. The bishops of the dioceses have been apologizing for suppressing culture since the mid-1980s. We are determined not to repeat the errors of the past.

Beginning last summer, under the leadership of Bishop Chad, I have been creating a list of all students who passed away at boarding schools within the Diocese of Fairbanks. It has been a slow process. Using the Jesuit house diaries I have been cross-referencing where students were buried.

In addition, I am creating a list of all Catholic cemeteries within the diocese. I have confirmed that both Akulurak and Holy Cross had more than one cemetery. I am continuing my research to ensure that we have an accurate account of cemeteries. The research has been slow, but in the end, those who want to find where their relatives were buried will have a resource that will make it easier for them.

Potlatch
As a side project, I have been researching the Catholic Church’s stance towards the potlatch near the Boarding School of Akulurak, St. Marys, and Holy Cross. Reviewing the Jesuit house diaries from boarding schools revealed an ever-changing stance.

In 1887 Holy Cross was established, and Akulurak in 1895. Up to the 1920s, the superiors of the schools only had issues if the potlatch was held during Lent, Christmas Day, or Holy Week, forbidding Yup’ik Catholics from attending. However, outside those times, the Catholic leadership did not mind the potlatch and sometimes helped out in gift-sharing when the local village had difficulties gathering enough goods. It was noted at Holy Cross that every year the boarding school allowed the “Big Boys” to attend the potlatch in the nearby village of Koserefsky.

In 1915 at Akulurak, when five shamans met at the potlatch, the superiors started changing their view of the potlatch from a festival to what they called “sorcery.” Over time Native customs and language were suppressed. Following the Second Vatican Council, the Church in Alaska began to take a new look at Native culture. In 1969, the St. Marys potlatch was no longer suppressed. In 1979 Srs. Jane Resop and Ann Christine danced in the potlatch held in Stebbins. This openness eventually led to several non-Native Catholics being potlatched.

The Diocese’s history showed a varying stance towards the potlatch from tolerance to suppression and then participation. We strive to ensure that we don’t repeat past mistakes by forgetting this history.
The end of last year marked the beginning of the synodal process in the Diocese of Fairbanks. In the last newsletter, there were a few articles covering what the synod is and why we are called to participate in it. In this article, I’d like to give a brief update on the process. The initial first phase of the synod process has concluded. Parishes from around the diocese have gathered together in their communities and responded to the questions posed by the synod. Many themes have arisen during the first process regarding the pros and the cons in how we the faithful are journeying together as Pope Francis has asked of us. These answers have given great insight into the understandings of the faith within our diocesan communities.

What’s Next? The synod process is not over yet. Many listening sessions are still happening with those on the peripherals or the edges of the Church as Pope Francis has requested. I encourage all of you to continue praying for the Church as we undergo the synod process.

Pope Francis reminds us that “Synodality is not just a simple discussion. Synodality is not the search for a major consensus. Synodality, is a style to be adopted in which the main protagonist, the Holy Spirit, who expresses Himself above all in the Word of God, read, meditated upon, and share together.” Be patient, continue to pray for the guidance of the Church under the Holy Spirit, and participate in whatever way you can to help journey together with the rest of the Catholic Church.

**Synod Process Update**

The modern family life can be hectic. Schedules are crazy, the to-do-list gets longer every day, and there never seems to be time to do anything you want to do. An old adage reads “if you make time for God in the day, God will make time for your day.” Here are five tips to allow God into your busy schedule.

1. Put a holy card on top of your phone or alarm and pray the prayer on it first thing waking up.
2. Pray a quick prayer of thanksgiving before you eat every meal. “Thank you, God. Amen”
3. Put a rosary in your car somewhere visible. Let it remind you to pray on your busy drives throughout the day.
4. Put holy water by your door so that whenever you leave or come home you can bless yourself throughout the day.
5. Place a prayer card on your bathroom mirror, and pray the prayer while brushing your teeth or tending to other hygiene needs throughout the day.

**Prayer in the Modern Family**
Staff Update

Fr. Welcome Chipiro

Fr. Chipiro has agreed to become the chaplain to the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks. This is in addition to his current assignment of Parochial Administrator for St. Nicholas Catholic Church in North Pole. Bishop Chad Zielinski would like to thank Fr. Chipiro for agreeing to make sure the Catholic School has the support of a chaplain.

Fr. Tom Kuffel

In June of 2016, Bishop Conley of the Diocese of Lincoln released Fr. Tom Kuffel for pastoral ministry in the Diocese of Fairbanks for a period of three years. After Fr. Tom completed his third year, Bishop Conley granted permission for him to continue to serve in the Diocese of Fairbanks with an annual evaluation of the needs of both dioceses. At this time, Bishop Conley has called Fr. Tom Kuffel back to his home diocese of Lincoln. As a priest in good standing and deeply spiritual, Fr. Tom Kuffel has ministered to the faithful in Northern Alaska for the past five and a half years with great energy, charisma, and deep faith, which he has shared with all he served.

Fr. Tom Kuffel served as the Pastor of Saint Joseph in Nome, the Pastor of Saint Francis Xavier Church in Kotzebue, Saint Jude Church in Little Diomede, and Saint Ann Church Teller from June 2016 until 30 September 2017. Fr. Tom has served as Pastor of Immaculate Conception in Fairbanks, Holy Mary of Guadalupe in Healy and St. Theresa in Nenana. Since arriving in the Diocese of Fairbanks, Fr. Sierra has been assisting at Sacred Heart Cathedral. His mission of growing the Hispanic ministry will continue even with his transfer to Immaculate Conception Church.

Fr. Juan Martin Sierra, IVE

Fr. Sierra has been assigned Parochial Administrator of the Parishes of Immaculate Conception in Fairbanks, Holy Mary of Guadalupe in Healy and St. Theresa in Nenana. Since arriving in the Diocese of Fairbanks, Fr. Sierra has been assisting at Sacred Heart Cathedral. His mission of growing the Hispanic ministry will continue even with his transfer to Immaculate Conception Church.

Revs. Aiden and Welcome at recent ordination.

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Pray with Pope Francis

Each year the Holy Father asks us to join him in praying 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.

February
Religious Sisters and Consecrated Women
We pray for religious sisters and consecrated women; thanking them for their mission and their courage; may they continue to find new responses to the challenges of our times.

Diocese Welcomes Fr. Michal Ulaski

I am Fr. Michael Ulaski. I am from Poland, from the Diocese of Radom. I lived, grew up in Radom, and went to the seminary there. My parents are alive, and I have two brothers. My parents were surprised when I said I wanted to go to Alaska for mission work, but they were happy. Bishop Chad Zielinski was in Poland in 2016. He also visited Radom. I was still in the seminary then. He talked about the diocese of Fairbanks, about the people, the challenges, and of course, the climate. A thought came to my heart to leave in the future and help in this diocese. I was ordained in 2018 and served in the parish in Gielniow, 30 miles from Radom. After two years, I asked my bishop for permission to leave. He was pleased and allowed me to leave. For a year, I was at the Mission Formation Center in Warsaw. The pandemic prevented me from going to Alaska. I finally made it to Fairbanks before Christmas. I want to serve God here and help to proclaim Christ, to help people to know God.
Fr. Mark Hoelsken, S.J.
Quyana Cakneq

Fr. Mark Hoelsken, S.J., ministered in this region for many years. Fr. Mark was assigned to Alaska after his ordination in 1991. He ministered in Chevak, Hooper Bay, and Scammon Bay for six years. Following a year in the Philippines as part of his formation, he served for three years in Newtok, Toksook Bay, Nightmute, and Chefornak. After a quick stint in Newtok and Chefornak, he accepted the ministry of Deacon Director. In 2006 he moved out of Alaska to study media and minister to three parishes on the Spokane Reservation. Fr. Mark returned to Alaska in 2012 and has accompanied the deacons ever since.

Fr. Mark’s care for the deacons and their families, his creativity, pastoral presence, dedication to social justice, and the Yup’ik Cup’ik way, along with his great laugh and will be greatly missed. We pray that he brings all his excellent gifts and talents to where God will call him next.

With heavy hearts, we thank you, Fr. Mark, and ask God to bless your next adventure.
Archbishop Seghers and the Two Healys

Capt. Michael Healy

The ship log of USS Cutter Bear records on July 6, 1887, “Lieutenant Kennidy with army and boat crew went on shore to arrest Frank Fuller for the murder of Right Rev. Seghers.” The commander of the ship, Capt. Michael Healy had been ordered to take Frank Fuller to Sitka for trial. After the murder, Frank Fuller and the body of Archbishop Seghers were taken to St. Michael. The Archbishop’s body was temporarily buried in the cemetery at St. Michael. Frank Fuller spent the winter in St. Michael, free to wander around awaiting his arrest after the winter break-up. Capt. Healy, who began Frank Fuller’s confinement which led to his trial, sentencing, and imprisonment, was a trailblazer and had a long history of supporting the Church in Alaska.

He was born into a family of trailblazers. His three oldest brothers all joined the priesthood. His oldest brother became the first African America Bishop in the United States. His second oldest brother became the first African American to earn a Ph.D. in the United States. His three sisters all became nuns, one of which became the first African American to educate someone considered a slave, his father had him and his 11 siblings educated in Catholic boarding schools in the northern states. Born into slavery as the son of a plantation owner who married one of his slaves, his mixed heritage qualified as an enslaved person upon birth. His parents’ marriage was illegal in Georgia at the time. Since it was also illegal to educate someone considered a slave, his father had him and his 11 siblings educated in Catholic boarding schools in the northern states.
to be mother superior of a convent in the United States.

When the Civil War broke out, Michael Healy applied for a commission with the Revenue Cutter Services. President Lincoln signed his commission. He would spend much of his time on ships cruising the waters of Alaska until he earned his command in 1886, the first African American to command a naval vessel in the United States.

Not only did he transport the murderer Frank Fuller but also supported the Church in Alaska by transporting clergy and supplies for free. The missionaries appreciated traveling by boat instead of using the arduous land routes. While transporting Dr. Sheldon Jackson, who was touring Alaska, they came up with the idea of creating reindeer herds to generate an economy and provide meat to the Alaska Natives. Captain Healy retired in 1903.

**The Other Healy, John Healy**

The other Healy, who had a town near Denali National Park named after him, is John Healy. He is also known for pointing a shotgun at a person in defense of Archbishop Seghers. John Healy opened a trading post near the entrance to the Chilkoot Trail in 1880. Foreseeing the possibility that there could be a gold strike in Alaska and that prospectors would pour into Alaska using the Chilkoot trail, he opened a trading post before anyone else.

When Archbishop Seghers decided to return to Nulato, he chose to take the Chilkoot Trail instead of the Unakleet Pass he used in 1877. Fr. Aloysius Robaut and Fr. Paschal Tosi joined Archbishop on the journey. Fr. Robaut records that Archbishop had an agreement with the Stick Indians to haul their supplies on the Chilkoot Trail. Everything was fine the first day, but Archbishop discovered the Chief of the Indian Packers wanted to renegotiate the price on the second morning. Trapped with 1,000 lbs. of supplies moved only one day up the trail, Archbishop relenting agreed with the warning that he would write a letter to the US Department of War about what the Chief was doing. The Chief became enraged, yelling and spitting at the Archbishop, sticking his finger into Archbishop’s chest. John Healy saw that the Natives and non-Natives were about to come to a battle, grabbed his shotgun, pointing it at the Chief. The Chief calmed down. When John Healy began writing down statements from witnesses to turn over to the government, the Chief reversed his cost increase. Later that morning, the Natives carried the supplies as previously agreed.

By supplying the miners, when gold strikes started occurring in Alaska, John Healy became wealthy with his trading post on the trail. The Stick Indians would not again ferry supplies on the Chilkoot as the Tlingit Indians who claimed the territory would take over the task. However, seeing the potential of charging to ferry supplies, John Healy brought in the Sitka Tlingits to haul supplies for his customers the following year. In the Indian Packers War of 1888, the two Tlingit tribes battled for control. Both chiefs killed each other, and by default, the Sitka Tlingit were allowed to ferry supplies. Over time the Tlingits would lose their monopoly of carrying supplies on the trail.

Both Healys played an essential part in Archbishop Seghers’s trip to Alaska, one at the beginning of his trip and the other at the very end.
Summary of the 2020 Annual Report
Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

OUTREACH
rendered to victim survivors and families, such as counseling, spiritual direction, or other services.

- 572 Newly identified victim survivors and families
- 1,886 Continued support for individuals identified in previous years

PROTECTION

Training Children 3,100,151
Training Adults 2,538,413
Background Checks 2,557,934

ALLEGATIONS

Current minors 22
Historical reports 4228
Total allegations 4250

COSTS

$44,416,089 Safeguarding and Protection (12% increase over 2019)
$311,980,666 Settlements, legal fees, outreach services, other expenses
$356,396,755 Total

Full report can be found here: www.usccb.org/offices/child-and-youth-protection/audits
To report child abuse, contact civil authorities. To report abuse involving a member of the clergy, also contact your local victim assistance coordinator: www.usccb.org/committees/protection-children-young-people/how-report-abuse