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The Compass

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There's a better way to begin revitalizing your parish

BY SAM LUCERO | THE COMPASS

APPLETON — Parishes striving to become active, welcoming communities need to set goals, understand the church's mission and have a spiritually energized staff, according to Rich Curran, founder of Parish Success Group, a Catholic nonprofit organization that trains parish staff in leadership and management skills.

However, getting there can be a challenge.

Most U.S. parishes follow a similar path when setting goals, said Curran.

"It's a basic template. You have a town hall meeting and you invite parishioners to come," he said.

Typically, three lists are created at these meetings.

- What do we do really well?
- What do we think really needs to be improved?
- What are our top priorities for the next five years?

"I can tell you what's on the first list without ever being in the room," said Curran. "We are



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Rich Curran, founder of Parish Success Group, will help lead a workshop on parish revitalization during the Convocation of Catholic Leaders, a national gathering taking place July 1-3 in Orlando, Fla.

very generous, very welcoming, we have a great pastor, he gives great homilies (especially if the pastor is sitting in the room), we have outstanding music and, if we have a Catholic school, we love our Catholic school."

The second list usually includes: "We need more kids. We need their parents. We

need more volunteers and we need more money," said Curran.

By the end of the meeting, parishes decide their top priorities for the next five years will be outreach to youth and parents, finding volunteers and raising money, said Curran.

Our full story appears in the June 16 issue.

FRANKLY, FRANCIS



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In our catechesis on Christian hope, we have found the source of that hope in God's unconditional love, revealed for us in the coming of the Son and the gift of the Holy Spirit. None of us can live without love. Happiness comes from the experience of knowing love, freely given and received. So much unhappiness in our world is born of the feeling of not being loved for our own sake. Faith teaches us that God loves us with an infinite love, not for any merit of our own, but out of his sheer goodness. Even when we stray from him, God seeks us out, like the merciful father in the parable of the prodigal son, offers us forgiveness, and restores us to his embrace. Through the resurrection of Jesus and the grace of the Holy Spirit, we become sharers in God's own life of love.

+ Pope Francis,
June 14, 2017

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Local Catholic honored for volunteer services to homeless, others in need

BY JEFF KUROWSKI | THE COMPASS

ALLOUEZ — Some of the children have grown a great deal since last summer, but Paula Rieder was able to recognize most of the returning young people who were among the crowd of approximately 275 gathered at Green Bay's Whitney Park on the evening of June 1.

Rieder, a member of Holy Family Parish in Brillion, serves as the children's games coordinator for the StreetLights Outreach block parties. Her other volunteer efforts include the St. John the Evangelist Homeless Shelter ministry team, the "Finding Our Way" retreat team and the Spokes for Hope bicycle program.

Rieder was recently honored for her outreach at the Wisconsin Public Service Leader-

ship Volunteer of the Year Awards, sponsored by the Volunteer Center of Brown County.

"Everything I've been involved in has been a gift or a blessing," she said. "It is such a gift to be in the presence of people of God. I see God in people. I find it such an honor to be with them, to hear their stories and see how God is working in their lives."

Our full story appears in the June 16 issue.

5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

About St. Thomas

PATRICIA KASTEN | THE COMPASS

- 1 Thomas, one of the Twelve, was also "Didymus," which means "twin." In Hebrew, *Teom* means "twin."
- 2 While Thomas doubted Jesus had risen, he had also bravely vowed to die with the Lord when Jesus went to raise Lazarus (Jn 11:16).
- 3 An apocryphal, second century work, the Acts of Thomas, says Thomas preached in India to "King Gundafor." A King Gondophernes (Gondophares) did reign at that time in an area that is now Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- 4 Most accounts say Thomas was martyred in India. His relics were moved to Edessa (now part of Turkey) by the third century.
- 5 Thomas is the patron of architects, perhaps because he served King Gundafor as a carpenter.

A mother's reflection on first Communion

The month of May ushers in beautiful spring weather and celebrations such as Mother's Day, first Communion and school and college graduations. Recently, my eldest son made his first Communion and I was deeply moved by the experience.



A SPACE FOR GRACE

Julianne Stanz

Leading up to his special day, my husband and I prepared our son by teaching him about God's love, Jesus' sacrifice and the beauty of the Mass. I had taught him the song that the Irish traditionally sing at first Communion entitled, "Cead Mile Failte Romhat a Iosa," which means "A Hundred Thousand Welcomes to You Jesus."

The words are translated as follows:

A hundred thousand welcomes, O Jesus,
O Jesus
A hundred thousand welcomes, O Jesus
A hundred thousand welcomes, O Savior
A hundred thousand welcomes, O Jesus,
O Jesus.

During Mass, as we prepare to welcome Jesus into our hearts we hear the words "This is my body given for you" (Lk 22:9). In the Scriptures, Jesus very clearly says, "THIS (meaning the bread and wine) is my body. He did not say "This is a sign of my body or this is similar to my body" but "this is my body." When Jesus says, "This is my body," we remember that God gave life to his body in his only Son through the incarnation.

When Jesus says, "This is my body," we remember the Blessed Mother who gave her body to nourish the savior of the world. What a beautiful message of life! Mary, "full of grace," gave her heart, mind and body over to God. Her "yes" changed the world. Each time she held Jesus, nourished him from her own body and watched his passion, she lived the words, "This is my body given for you."

As my son was walking up to receive his

first Communion, I remembered the day that I found out I was going to be a mother and a series of images came to my mind — the day I felt him kicking inside me, the moment I first held him in my arms, his baptism, his first day of school and I was filled with joy. As Fr. Peter said to him, "The body of Christ," for the first time my son received Jesus in the gift of the Eucharist. As a baby, he left the safety of my body to enter the world but became a part of a different body — the body of Christ. The church, as the body of Christ, stands with her arms open like a mother to welcome, nourish and care for us.

The ability to receive Jesus in the Eucharist is a gift. Nobody can receive the Eucharist for you. It has to be a free, conscious act that you choose for yourself. I could not receive Eucharist for my son. He had to step forward and meet Jesus in the Eucharist for himself. As a parent, I can only lead my child in faith and teach him as best as I can. As Anne Frank said, "Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands."

Every time we receive the Eucharist, we can do so with the eyes of a child receiving for the first time and look upon those receiving with the unconditional love of the father and the mother.

As Christians, we have the choice to be Christ's body in the world, as St. Teresa of Avila reminds us, "Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless his people."

This is my body, given for you. How will I be his body in the world today?

Stanz is director of the diocesan Department of New Evangelization and co-author of "The Catechist's Backpack."

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Parish SNAPSHOT

Members of the Spirit of Isaiah Choir from St. Benedict Parish in Suamico lead the congregation in song during the parish's 100th anniversary celebration on June 18.

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