

ROOTED & SENT



News, stories, and updates from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Lay Initiative

Come Spirit Come (page 2)

Archdiocese of Milwaukee
Consultation for the USCCB
Pastoral on the Laity

Vatican II Awards (page 3)

Learn about the Lay Pastoral
Staff members who received
the 2025 Vatican II Award

Lay Initiative & Marquette (page 4)

Learn about the Lay Initiative
partnership with Marquette

In the Footsteps of St. Paul (page 6)

Learn about Cor Unum and the
summer pilgrimage
opportunity.

A New Intercessor (page 7)

We've added another Saint to
our powerhouse of
intercessions! Check out who!

A year in review

It's hard to believe the Lay Initiative is already celebrating its first year! Over the past twelve months, we have been praying, researching, discerning, and planning - always with a deep desire to listen closely to your hopes and needs. Every step we've taken has been with you in mind.

Please know that we are here to listen, to support, and to walk alongside you.

Looking ahead to 2026, we're excited to roll out Coffee Shop Open Houses, highlight the powerful stories many of you have offered to share, and unveil more of our Saint intercessors.

Thank you for the incredible work you do in your parish communities. We see you, we are grateful for you, and we are continually inspired by your faith and dedication.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,
Brenda and Meg



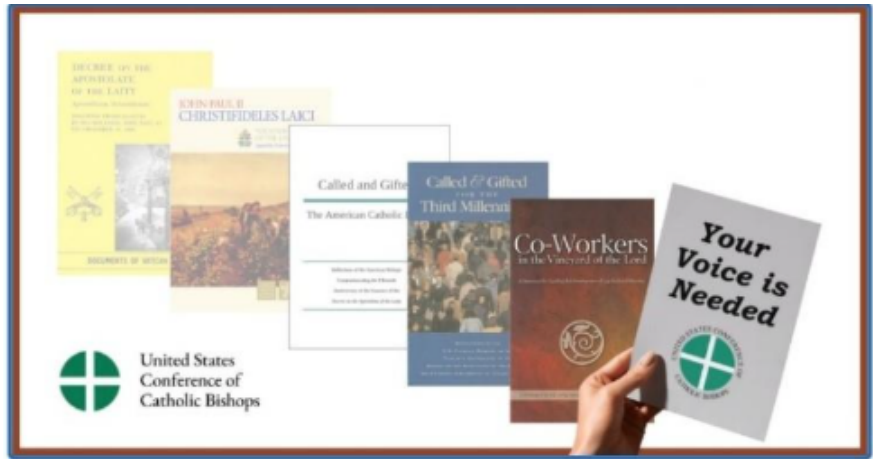
Come Spirit, Come

Archdiocese of Milwaukee Consultation for the USCCB Pastoral on the Laity

The Holy Spirit was powerfully at work during our Archdiocesan listening sessions for the USCCB, as we joined the Church across the nation in preparing for a new pastoral document on the laity.

Bishop Robert Barron, who serves as Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth, invited dioceses to

gather God's people for prayerful reflection and conversation. Together — laity, clergy, and consecrated religious — were asked to listen to the Spirit and to one another as we reflected on the gift and mission of the baptized.



This new document, expected in 2027, will build on a rich tradition of Church teaching — from *Called and Gifted* (1980) and *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* (1995) to *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (2005). These documents, along with the vision of the Second Vatican Council, continue to remind us that every baptized person is called and sent to share in Christ's mission.

Our synodal-style listening sessions were grace-filled. We heard the hopes, challenges, and dreams of lay Catholics who seek to live their baptismal call with joy and courage. True

synodality invites us to open our hearts, to receive the perspectives of others as gifts, and to allow the Holy Spirit to weave these voices into a shared vision for the Church. We look forward to sharing a summary of what we heard.

Save the date

Lay Initiative Annual Event

Monday, June 1

1:00pm - 3:00pm

Mary Mother of the Church
Pastoral Center

Join us for Mass with Archbishop Grob
with fellowship to follow

To all who participated — and to all who prayed for the process — thank you. Your witness helps ensure that the lived experience of lay Catholics in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee will help shape the bishops' discernment and the Church's future.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord...

Over the past few months, we learned about the passing of several former Lay Ministers who dedicated their lives to service in the Church.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Brigid M. O'Donnell

May 8, 1947 — July 31, 2025



[Read about Brigid here.](#)

Barb Searing

March 24, 1950 - September 8, 2025



[Read about Barb here.](#)

Sister Josephe Maria Flynn SSND

March 3, 1941 - August 7, 2025



[Read more about Sr. Josephe here.](#)

Vatican II Awards

On Thursday, September 25 we celebrated the 34th Annual Vatican II Awards. Archbishop Grob recognized 15 individuals who are exemplify the Catholic Church's vision set forth in the Second Vatican Council and through the mission of our Popes since that time. Congratulations to the following Lay Pastoral Staff members who received the 2025 Vatican II Award:

Dave Grunwaldt

Director of Administrative Services

St. Barnabas Parish, West Allis

Vatican II Award for Leadership in Administration

Maureen Rotramel

Director of Faith Formation & Pastoral Care

St. John XXIII Parish, Port Washington

Vatican II Award for Leadership in the Church

Chad Griesel

Pastoral Associate

Family of Five Parishes, Milwaukee

Vatican II Award for Leadership in Education

Nicholas Carroa

Sacristan and Maintenance

Old Saint Mary Parish, Milwaukee

Vatican II Award for Leadership in Liturgy and Worship

Al McCauley

Director of Adult Faith Formation

St. Anthony on the Lake Parish

Pope Benedict XVI Award for Leadership in Scholarship & Academia

For more information on the Vatican II Awards, this year's award recipients, and information on the nomination process, please contact Meg Aspinwall or visit [the Catholic Herald](#) or [the Vatican II Awards website](#)



Lay Initiative Collaboration with Marquette University

We are especially pleased to announce a new collaboration with Marquette University and its Catholic Schools and Parishes Initiative, led by Dr. Dan Scholz. This partnership will begin with Advent and Lent Days of Reflection for pastors and their lay pastoral staff members (details are available in this newsletter on page 5).

These gatherings will be moments of prayer, renewal, and shared vision — strengthening the bond between clergy and laity as co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord. Additional formation opportunities through this collaboration will be announced soon.

We are deeply grateful for this partnership with Marquette University and look forward to the Spirit's guidance as we continue building up the Church together.

Check out our booth

Featured at the 2025 Catechetical Conference, Fall Clergy Day, and a USCCB Listening Session.

We have loved putting this booth together and look forward to more opportunities to feature what we're working on!



Keep your eyes peeled for new additions to our display!!

Did you know?

The Office to the Lay Initiative manages a fund that helps lay pastoral staff (and others working for the local Church) apply for grants to attend conferences, retreats, and other professional development opportunities.

Who can apply? Anyone currently employed, at least 20 hours a week, by a parish or Catholic institution in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

How much can I apply for? A maximum grant of \$500 may be awarded within a fiscal year.

How can I apply? Visit our [website](https://www.archmil.org/lay-initiative) to download the application.

If you'd like to know more, please contact Meg Aspinwall at aspinwallm@archmil.org!

Pastoral Staff Retreat Days

Advent 2025 & Lent 2026

Sponsored by the Catholic Schools and Parishes Initiative at Marquette University in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Office of the Lay Initiative

Advent Day of Reflection with Bishop Hying
Thursday, December 4 | 9:30am - 2:30pm
Mary Mother of the Church Pastoral Center

Join us for an Advent Day of Reflection for pastors and lay pastoral staff, led by Bishop Hying, Bishop of Madison. The cost for the retreat is \$25.00 per person which includes a continental breakfast and lunch.

[Register Here](#)



Lenten Day of Reflection with

Fr. Michael Simone, SJ

**“From Ashes to Fire: A Journey Through
Lent to Pentecost”**

Thursday, March 12 | 9:30am - 2:30pm

Marquette University

Join us for a Lenten Day of Reflection for pastors and lay pastoral staff, led by Fr. Michael Simone, SJ, pastor of Gesu Parish. The cost for the retreat is \$25.00 per person which includes a continental breakfast, lunch, and parking validation.

[Register here](#)



In the Footsteps of St. Paul

We are blessed to share a meaningful partnership with Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology through the Cor Unum Master of Arts program, which offers a focused track in systematic theology. This rigorous two-year formation pathway includes an optional summer pilgrimage between the first and second year—an opportunity for spiritual and theological enrichment beyond the classroom. In May and June, I had the privilege of traveling with the now second year Cor Unum Cohort to Greece and Turkey.

Led by the fearless and ever hilarious Dr. Patrick Russell, we traced St. Paul's footsteps through Greece in Ancient Corinth, Athens, Meteora, Kalambaka, Thessalonica (modern-day Thessaloniki), and Phillipi. Just outside the city walls of Phillipi, we

stopped at the site where Paul met Lydia, a merchant of purple cloth and the first Christian baptized on European soil. The outdoor baptistry, adorned with beautiful iconography, offered a sacred setting for us to celebrate Mass, renew our baptismal promises, and pray quietly by the river. It was one of the most peaceful and cherished moments of the pilgrimage.



Ancient Corinth, in front of the Bema

Ending our journey in Greece, we made the journey across the border to Turkey where we visited Istanbul, Nicea, Izmir, and Ephesus.

Much of our time in Turkey focused on the early Church Councils. One of the most memorable visits was to Hagia Sophia, meaning "Holy Wisdom." Now an active mosque, parts of it remain open to the public as a museum. The space itself is a remarkable

convergence of East and West—Christian mosaics from its time as a church sit alongside the prayers of Muslim worshippers. The juxtaposition of these sacred expressions, past and present, was deeply moving. We stood in the very room where the Second Council of Constantinople convened in 553 A.D., addressing the nature of Jesus' humanity.

Our final day on the ground was spent in Ephesus—and it did not disappoint. We began at the house believed to be the final home of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Though our time inside was brief, the holiness of the space was undeniable.

Throughout our pilgrimage, the Cor Unum students offered presentations of the various Church Councils - one of the requirements to get course credit for the pilgrimage.



The Parthenon, Athens



Outside of Mary's House, Ephesus



*Current Cor Unum Students with Dr. Russell
Ancient Ephesus*

If you are interested in learning more about Cor Unum, the summer pilgrimage opportunity, and the Archbishop's Scholar Fund that can help with the cost of the program, contact Meg Aspinwall at aspinwallm@archmil.org. We are starting to recruit for the Fall 2026 Cohort!

You can also find more information about Sacred Heart and Cor Unum [here](#).

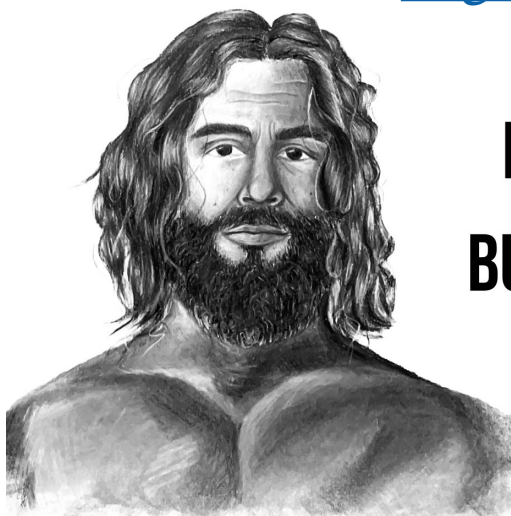
Desert Days

Giving you permission to rest, be still, and reconnect with the Lord

A "Desert Day" is a short time set aside for silence and prayer. It is an opportunity to step away from daily noise so that we can listen to God with an individual ear. Inspired by St. John the Baptist, the voice crying in the wilderness (Mk 1:3), it embraces simplicity: Scripture, quiet adoration, journaling, and a leisurely walk or rosary. Like John's call to "prepare the way" a Desert Day invites conversion and clarity - naming what to repent of, what to receive, and where the Lord is sending us next. The tone is gentle-focused: less doing, more abiding, so you can return to your daily life refreshed and re-aligned with Christ.

For more information or to register, click below!

[Register here](#)



**HE MUST INCREASE,
BUT I MUST DECREASE.**

JOHN 3:30

A New Intercessor

The newest Saint we have in our arsenal of intercessors is **St. Pier Giorgio Frassati** who was Canonized by Pope Leo XIV on Sunday, September 7, 2025. He was a vibrant young Italian layman who embodied what it means to live the Gospel with joy. Known for his deep devotion to the Eucharist and Mary, Pier Giorgio balanced a life of prayer with tireless service to the poor and sick, often giving away his money, time, and energy to those in need. An avid mountain climber, skier, and outdoorsman, he rallied his friends to see creation as a place to encounter God and to live their faith boldly. Nicknamed the “*Man of the Beatitudes*” by Pope John Paul II, Pier Giorgio’s short life—he died at just 24 from polio contracted while serving the sick—left a lasting legacy of holiness rooted in joy, courage, and compassion. His motto, “*Verso l’alto*” (“to the heights”), continues to inspire young people and all the faithful to strive for heaven.

Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati, pray for us.



PRAYER TO
St. Pier Giorgio Frassati


Patron Saint of Ordinary People

St. Pier Giorgio Frassati, patron of ordinary people, who brought comfort and happiness to those who were suffering, pray for us.

Inspire us as lay ministers of the Church to find holiness in everyday life, to serve with joy, and to resist mediocrity.

Keep our hearts rooted in the Eucharist so that everything we do may lead us — and those we serve — “verso l’alto,” to the heights.

Amen.

 ARCHDIOCESE of MILWAUKEE
OFFICE OF THE
Lay Initiative



Brenda Cline

Director of the Lay Initiative,
Evangelization & Catechesis,
and Priest Placement

414-769-3458 | clineb@archmil.org

Meg Aspinwall

Associate Director of
the Lay Initiative
414-758-2223

aspinwallm@archmil.org