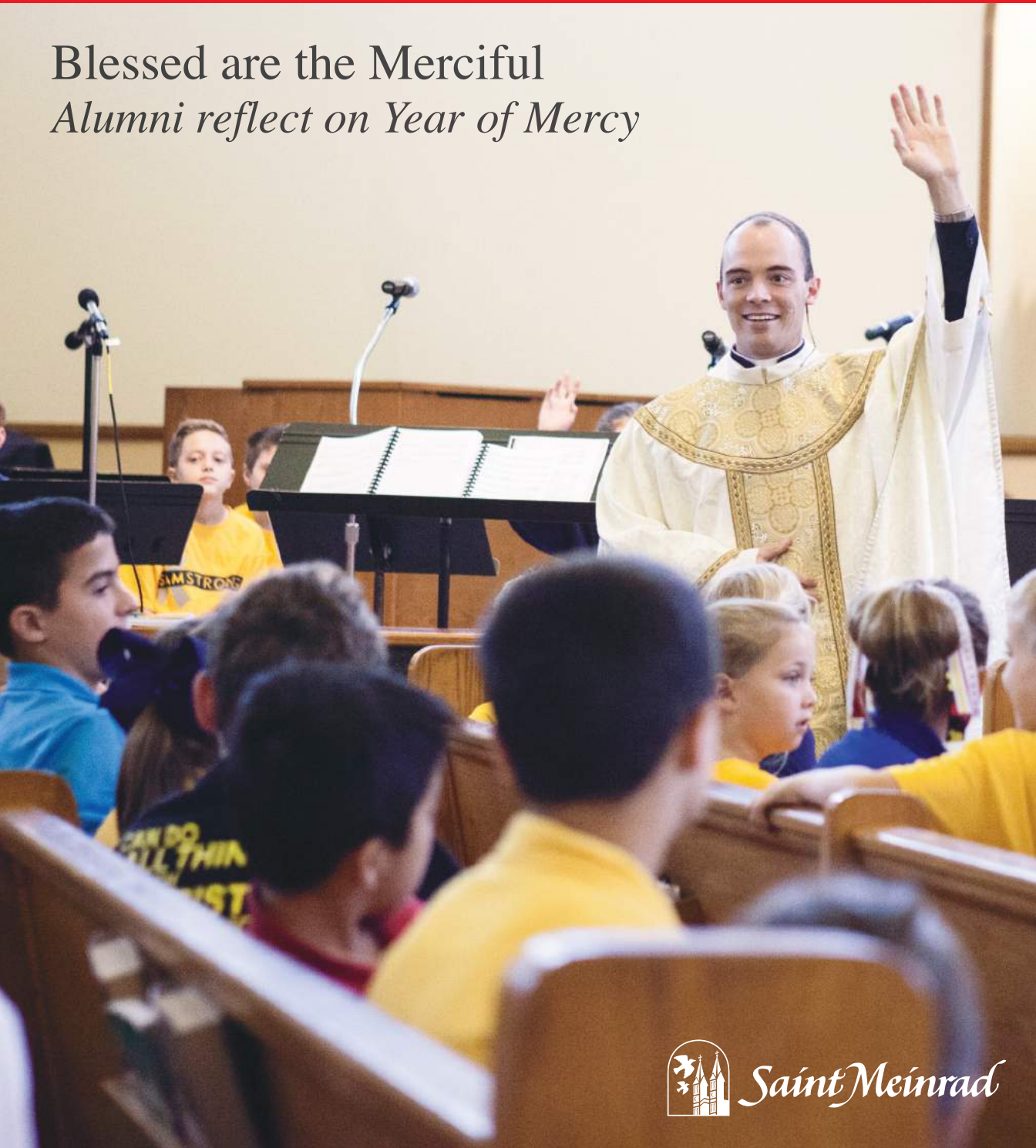


VOICES from the Vineyard

A magazine about ministry for alumni of Saint Meinrad.

Blessed are the Merciful
Alumni reflect on Year of Mercy



Saint Meinrad

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Christian Mocek

A year and a half ago, the Alumni Association Board of Directors embarked on a journey of discussion and discovery. They sent surveys, held conversations, and dug deep to find exactly what Saint Meinrad alumni wanted from their alma mater.

Through that process, two significant themes arose. Our alumni wanted more professional development opportunities and they wanted more chances to reconnect with the spirituality lived out at Saint Meinrad.

The board is still working to define how the Alumni Association will offer those in the future, but a couple of new programs have emerged. One of them is this new publication named *Voices from the Vineyard*.

The work of Saint Meinrad alumni is inextricably tied to work in the vineyard of the Lord, whether that is in the Catholic parish, school or workplace. If our alums are not

leading parishes or employed by parishes, they are often volunteers with important roles in their local church.

Knowing that, we thought there was no better source of ministry knowledge and expertise than our alumni themselves! In this issue and in subsequent issues, our alumni will share lessons learned from their work in the vineyard of the Lord and share some spiritual nourishment to help us all in that work.

This first issue discusses a topic at the heart of work in the vineyard of the Lord. That, of course, is mercy.

As workers in the vineyard of the Lord, we know that our primary work is to bring Christ, who is mercy, to all. In the following pages, you will hear from a priest who served as a Missionary of Mercy during the Year of Mercy, a young priest whose first 100 days of priesthood was full of merciful encounters, and a parish whose merciful work has changed lives.

Certainly, the lessons of the Year of Mercy are timeless and there can be no better place to start. So off we go!

Christian Mocek

VOICES from the Vineyard

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LOUISVILLE PARISH LEARNS LESSONS OF MERCY, COMPASSION

St. Agnes Catholic Parish in Louisville, KY, sits halfway around the world from the conflict in Syria. Yet, this past year, a committee from the parish worked hard to make that distance much smaller.

Theresa Secord MTS'99 ('97-99), the pastoral associate at St. Agnes Parish, was approached by a group of four parishioners in January of 2016 in hopes the parish would help settle a refugee family from Syria in Louisville. Excited by the prospect and well aware of the immense suffering of the Syrian people, Theresa immediately began work on the project.

Theresa told the group, "You have the monies if you need them, the support of the pastor and pastoral council, so let's go for it."

The parish needed a partner to get started. "There is an ecumenical place in town called Kentucky Refugee Ministries. KRM has a long history of relocating refugees and we were planning to co-sponsor. This was not something we wanted to jump into hook, line and sinker with no experience," explains Theresa.

With parish leadership behind them and an experienced partner at their side, the group held a program on a Sunday afternoon and invited parishioners who were interested in volunteering. They had a presentation on the Syrian conflict, an overview of the resettlement program by a KRM staff member, and some Syrian food for attendees to try. To Theresa's surprise, 75 parishioners showed up and the ministry took off from there.

"We stressed that we wanted a lot of people doing a little bit. And that is the way it worked. We got eight committees together (furniture, food, etc.) and people signed up at the next

meeting to be a part of one of those committees."

By mid-summer, KRM informed the parish they had a family that would arrive by the beginning of September. With that news, volunteers mobilized and filled the house with the needed supplies. Unfortunately, on the day the family was supposed to leave, they did not show up at the airport.

"We don't know what happened and still don't know. The fighting in Aleppo is outside their camp so it is likely the road to the airport is closed. It is not that they didn't want to come; it is most likely they can't," says Theresa.

"When I got that message, the welcoming committee already had signs, balloons, and taken their kids to the airport. We were so disappointed and worried if they were OK."

Disappointed and concerned, the group took a step back. Then, a few days later, another call from KRM came. They had a family coming to Louisville next week from a refugee camp in Tanzania that did not have a sponsor. They wondered if St. Agnes Parish would be interested.

The coordinating team did not have to think too hard – they sponsored the family.

"There is a need on both sides. It has been so good for the parish," explains Theresa. "The Year of Mercy was one of our driving forces. Pope Francis called all parishes to settle a Syrian family and when the Syrians couldn't come, there were other families that needed our help."

The parish still plays an active role in the life of the family and the family has visited the parish



Members of the St. Agnes Parish Refugee Resettlement Team gather for a picture with the refugee family on the steps of their new home.

a couple of times. Theresa says the committee plans to settle another family in the spring of 2017.

“This has made my life and many other people’s lives take on a new meaning. This whole experience has made us all more humble, more patient, more compassionate and more forgiving. People are gaining a greater awareness of how blessed we are and how we are called to share that blessedness with others.”

For those parish leaders hesitant to take up this work, Theresa says it takes courage but the impact is worth the risk.

“I wish that every parish could have this experience. And if anyone needs to know how, we can share our story. I think other parishes should take up the challenge of being a merciful, compassionate and understanding parish – it’s awesome.”

Christian Mocek



Theresa Secord

Theresa Secord MTS’99 (’97-99) is originally from Muskegon, MI, and came to Louisville after receiving her degree from Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. She has worked at St. Agnes Catholic Parish in Louisville as the pastoral associate for over three years.

In that role, she is responsible for marriage preparation, RCIA, adult faith formation, annulments, the peace and justice committee, the newly formed refugee resettlement committee, and other duties as assigned by the pastor.

If you would like to learn more about her work with refugee resettlement, you can email her at tsecord@stagneslouisville.org.

MERCY IS GOD:

A Missionary of Mercy brings forgiveness and love

Mercy is God's most distinctive characteristic!

Throughout this past year, I have been afforded the opportunity, again and again, to relay these words as a Missionary of Mercy in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Another way of saying this might be to say God's most distinctive characteristic is tender compassion. God always desires that we, his beloved creation, be reconciled to Him.

As is said in the prayer of absolution, "God the father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his son, has reconciled the world to Himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins."

Indeed, God's most distinctive characteristic is mercy and tender compassion and He desires the reconciliation of his children always. To paraphrase our Holy Father Pope Francis, "God never tires of forgiving."

To understand this concept of forgiving, we have to look no further than the 15th chapter of Luke's Gospel in the beautiful parable of the prodigal son, or we might say, the prodigal sons.

While it is true that the younger son goes off and in a wayward way squanders his father's gift – his inheritance – it is equally true that the older son sins by smoldering in resentment when his younger brother returns and he will not come into the house and acknowledge his brother's homecoming.

Thankfully, our God does not love in limited and broken ways as we often do. Thankfully, God's most distinctive characteristic is mercy. Thankfully, God is like the father in the story of the prodigal sons who comes out to meet his sons where they are and does not demand an apology or demand them to grovel. Instead, he embraces one in love and extends an invitation for the other to come to the celebration.



It is interesting to note the words of the father to the older son when he goes out to meet him. He says, "This brother of yours was dead and has come back to life, he was lost and is found." In essence, I believe, the father is metaphorically pointing toward the resurrection: "he was dead and has come back to life."

When we fail to forgive, we deny the resurrection. When we fail to forgive, we deny

that we want to be a part of the heavenly banquet. When we fail to forgive, we fail to love as God loves us.

God's most distinctive characteristic is mercy. Pray to God that the grace of the Year of Mercy will teach us to more fully love like our God.

*Fr. Joseph Moriarty
C'89 ('85-89)*



Fr. Joseph Moriarty

Fr. Joseph Moriarty C'89 ('85-89) is the rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary located in Indianapolis, IN. He was one of 1,000 priests commissioned by Pope Francis to be a Missionary of Mercy during the Year of Mercy.

In addition to the emphasis on their role as preachers and confessors, the Missionaries of Mercy were given two special faculties that are usually unavailable to the average priest. First, they were not limited in geographic location in terms of hearing confessions. Secondly, Missionaries of Mercy were able to absolve sins in cases otherwise reserved to the Holy See.

Fr. Moriarty served as an associate director of spiritual formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology from 2010-2015. In 2013, he was named vice rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary and was named rector in 2016.

MY FIRST 100 DAYS AS A PRIEST



Fr. Tyler Tenbarger greets students after Mass at St. John the Baptist Parish in Newburgh, IN.

There I sat. It was the morning after my ordination and I was spending some time at my home parish in Haubstadt, Indiana. I prayed about the previous day in our diocesan cathedral. I prayed about the previous eight years of seminary formation. I prayed about how the Lord had called me in both quiet and overt ways over the past 28 years and I prayed about the days ahead.

Ordination was over. Seminary was done. Day 1 of priesthood dawned. What were to be the greatest joys? How or where would I find the Cross? How would grace surprise me? That morning I decided to chronicle these first days on Instagram and Facebook (#fathertylersfirst100days), and for the following months I shared the joys, struggles and unexpected graces that have come my way.

On Day 4, I joined the “One Bread, One Cup” conference for confessions, vesting behind the monks’ stalls in the Abbey Church. For the first time, I sat as a brother priest with the monks who had taught and guided me.

On Day 7, I chose to bless my hometown with holy water rather than throwing out candy while serving as parade grand marshal. On Day 80, I anointed my aunt before her surgery and on Day 79, just weeks before he passed away, I concelebrated a Mass with Fr. Hillary Meny who, at 101 years old, still uttered the words of consecration after 76 years of priestly ministry.

But there were tough days, too. On Day 18, the first at my new parish assignment, I took an emergency call from a hospital before

unpacking a single box from my stuffed car. I didn't even have my oils stocked and had to borrow. Days 39, 78 and 98 were so busy I had forgotten what happened before reading them again.

One of the toughest and yet one of the most beautiful days came later. On Day 150, I received a card from a family whose premature son I had baptized at the hospital minutes before he died on Day 142. It was the Feast of All Saints.

On Day 25, I met a drifter in the parking lot, and on Day 59, I met a woman at Home Depot. They saw my black clothing and white collar and knew who I was: a mediator between God and man. On Day 26, I found myself surprised by grace as a few tears welled up in my eyes at a funeral home for a man I didn't even know.

Today is Day 162 and I am writing this article. What began as a simple prayer asking the



Fr. Denis Robinson, OSB, teaches a course to seminary students.

Lord's presence in my new life as a priest became a powerful avenue for sharing the life of a 21st-century Catholic priest.

A grade-school boy has been following this journey on Instagram with his mother. On Day 74, he joined me for private Mass. As he sat in that chapel, he prayed about what God has in store for his life. If God is calling him like He called me, then there will be no more adventurous, meaningful and fulfilling life he could imagine.

*Fr. Tyler Tenbarge
T'16 ('12-16)*



Fr. Tyler Tenbarge

Fr. Tyler Tenbarge T'16 ('12-16) was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Evansville in the summer of 2016. He currently serves as the associate pastor at St. John the Baptist Parish in Newburgh, IN.



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BOOK REVIEW

Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition, by Gary A. Anderson (New Haven: Yale, 2013), 189 pp., ISBN 0300198833



Even as he closed the Holy Doors of Mercy, Pope Francis gave the church a “tangible sign of this Extraordinary Holy Year” by establishing the annual celebration of the World Day of the Poor on the Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time.

This new addition to the liturgical calendar is rooted in a very old understanding of the place of the poor in Jewish and Christian faith. As biblical scholar Gary Anderson demonstrates, charity toward the poor holds pride of place among the acts of mercy that God rewards with mercy.

Of course, God’s concern for the poor pervades the scriptures. But in the books written during the Second Temple period, “the poor become a necessary and indeed nonnegotiable point of access to the Kingdom of God” (3). These books include Tobit and Sirach, but also the Synoptic Gospels, in which charity toward the poor is presented as necessary for salvation.

To the rich man who asks what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus says, “Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (Mark 10:21).

Modern readers dismiss such talk of a heavenly treasury funded by gifts of earthly

money as a somewhat embarrassing figure of speech. Surely Jesus can’t mean that the way to heaven is paved with coinage?

Yet Anderson shows that the writers and early Christian interpreters of the New Testament *did* think in such concrete, “sacramental” terms about the coins placed into the hands of a person who could not repay them. Those who were merciful toward the poor had strong scriptural grounds for believing that God would mercifully set their alms against the debts incurred by their sins.

They knew that “whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full” (Prov 19:17). Anderson excels in distinguishing the biblical faith that led generations of Jews and Christians to become God’s “creditors” from the “prosperity Gospel” that televangelists have hawked in recent years to people willing to trade their credit card numbers for the promise of a blessing.

The gift of alms (from the Greek *eleemosune*, “mercy”) is no fee-for-service agreement. It is, “to put it briefly, a sacramental act,” closely linked to the Eucharist because both celebrate “a display of mercy.”

Along with the Eucharist, almsgiving is one of “the two privileged means of channeling grace and dealing with the baneful effects of human

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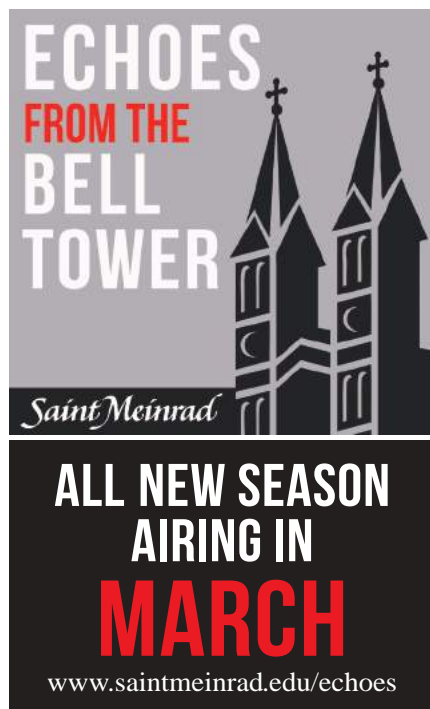
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sin.” While the Eucharist brings us into the presence of God’s ultimate act of mercy in Christ, charity allows us “to participate in this divine act by imitating that mercy” in our daily actions (7-8).

Anderson’s short book is an exciting read that easily holds the attention of those who, like me, are not professional biblical scholars.

As we consider how we should celebrate the first annual World Day of the Poor in our parishes and homes, this book can serve as an important reminder that the door of God’s mercy always remains open to those who open their hands and hearts to the poor.

Dr. Nathaniel Marx



Dr. Nathaniel Marx

Dr. Marx earned his PhD in theology (liturgical studies) from the University of Notre Dame in 2013. He received his bachelor’s degree in anthropology and philosophy in 2000 and a master’s in theological studies in 2007, both from Notre Dame.

He also earned a Master of Arts in social sciences in 2003 from the University of Chicago. His doctoral thesis was on “Ritual in the Age of Authenticity: An Ethnography of Latin Mass Catholics.”

Most recently, he taught at Notre Dame in the undergraduate program in the Department of Theology. He joined the Saint Meinrad faculty in Fall 2014. He is a member of the American Academy of Religion, College Theology Society, North American

Patristics Society, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and a visitor to the North American Academy of Liturgy.

*God never tires of forgiving us;
we are the ones who tire of*
SEEKING HIS MERCY.

– Pope Francis,
Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel



Interested in hearing more stories like these? Do you know alumni who should be featured? Please share your feedback and suggestions with Christian Mocek, director of alumni relations, at cmocek@saintmeinrad.edu or (812) 357-6501.



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