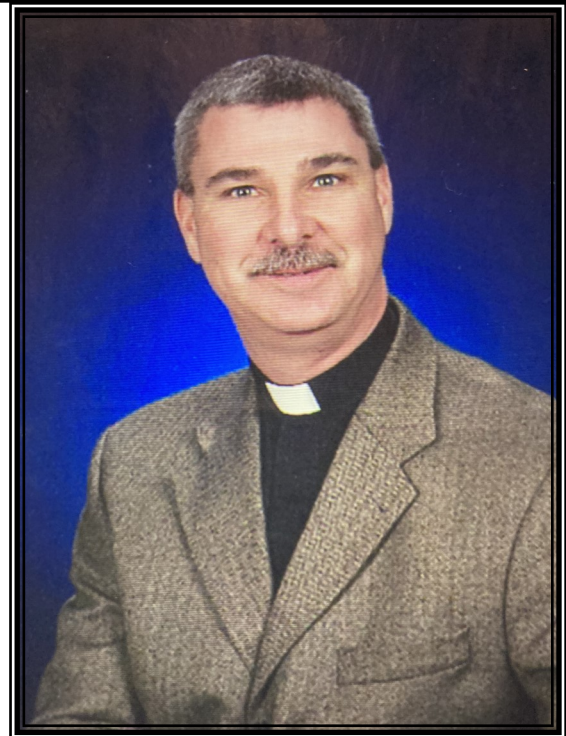


## Welcome Fr. Thomas Konopka New Pastor of Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Grace and St. Joseph's By Marge Rizzo

When asked what he enjoys most about parish life, Father Tom Konopka didn't hesitate to answer "the people." He wants to be with them both for the significant moments and the things of everyday life. He enjoys seeing parishioners come alive in their faith and see the relevance of the church to their lives.

Fr. Tom grew up in Fort Edward, one of four children. One sister has died, but a brother and sister still live in the area along with his extended family, which at one point included 25 first cousins. He was educated in public schools. His father died when he was in high school, and his parish priest suggested he go to St. John Fisher College in Rochester. This would be the first Catholic school he would attend, and he graduated from there with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in psychology. He had considered the priesthood when he was in grade school and high school, but after college he became a lay minister working with the poor in Rensselaer. He eventually went into the seminary with the idea that if it didn't work out he would pursue a doctorate. It did work out, and Fr. Konopka was ordained thirty-two years ago. He has served in Blessed Sacrament in Albany, St. Pius in Loudonville, the churches in Greenwich, Cambridge and Salem, and St. Michael's in Troy. He was the sacramental minister at St. Clare's in Colonie during which time he was studying at SUNY Albany for a degree in social work that he received in 2007. He is coming to our Tri Parishes from St. John the Evangelist and St. Joseph, Rensselaer and the Church of St. Mary in East Greenbush.

Fr. Tom brings the experiences from these churches to Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Grace, and St. Joseph which he sees as three separate parishes bound together by Christ. Each has its own identity and culture, and each should



continue to celebrate the unique traditions they have cherished. While the fear of what will happen exists, he is thinking not of closing but of working together to grow our communities. He is hopeful that we will look for what we can do together while celebrating the identity of our individual parish communities.

Fr. Tom sees the Church as a change agent. People are stronger when they are together than when they are apart which, in today's news, translates to helping the people in Ukraine. Fr. Tom has led his current parishioners to contribute necessary items which have been given to their local Ukrainian church. Fr. Tom believes that what keeps us alive is what we do for others. Jesus can make a difference in the lives of others.

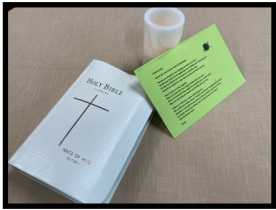
See Fr. Tom, page 3

**Ministry Update  
Prayer Shawl Ministry**

The Prayer Shawl Ministry at Immaculate Conception began in 2010 when Fr. Jerry encouraged Pat Peluso to start it. Pat had recently moved to Glenville to be closer to her daughter and had been a member of this ministry in her former church in Pleasant Valley, New York.

Prayer shawls give comfort and hope to ill or grieving people. The love of knitting and crocheting is combined with spiritual compassion to bring comfort and solace to those in need.

The origin of the prayer shawl appears in the Old Testament Book of Numbers and Deuteronomy as a biblical practice of Jewish men. It is currently a ministry in Catholic churches across the country.



At the start of each meeting, the members of Immaculate Conception's ministry light a candle and say a prayer. Each member creates her own shawl with the pattern and washable yarn of her own choice and besides working on it at the meeting will continue with the project on her own. Pat has patterns available, and a bin of yarn in the library is available for those who do not have their own. The finished shawl will be about three feet by four feet, an appropriate size if the recipient is wheelchair-bound. If it will be worn around the shoulders, it will measure approximately 50 inches by 25 inches.

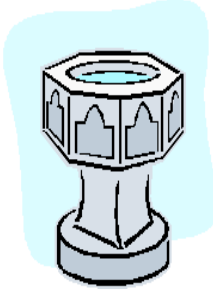
When the shawls are completed, they are blessed by a priest and given to Rachel Winters, Pastoral Care Coordinator, for distribution.

Currently, three to five members attend the meetings, so the ministry is seeking new participants. Meetings are held on the third Monday of the month, at 10 a.m. in the Library. Consider joining in this ministry of caring and compassion. Contact Pat Peluso, at 518-952-6343, for additional information and to sign up.



The knitters, left to right: Ceil Ahearn, Norma Angelino, and Pat Peluso

**Times of Joy  
Sacramental Milestones**



*Congratulations and welcome to these children who received the Sacrament of Baptism from January 20, 2022 to April 21, 2022. We*

*pray for the grace these families need to grow in their faith.*

Raegan Lynn Doty  
child of Nathan & Jennifer

Dawson James Aker  
child of Dakota & Katelyn

Lucas Robert Hudson  
child of Robert & Nicole

Elise Margaret Vuillaume  
child of Erik & Mara

George Budesheim IV,  
child of George & Emily

Raymond Ryan Walega  
child of Ryan & Melissa



### Fr. Tom, continued from page 1

With these beliefs, it is not a surprise that Fr. Tom will be staying in his position as Director of the Diocesan Consultation Center. His work as a social worker matches Catholic social teaching—the belief that social justice is part of the Church. He realized that a lot of what he learned in his training to be a social worker meshed with Church teaching with belief in Christ first. This marriage of beliefs and principles can help us have better communities. He has blended the two in workshops, classes, and one-on-one counseling, with Zoom as a help over the last few years. As he moves into the new position here, he will be reducing his schedule at the Center from 10-15 hours a week to 8-9 hours; he will not have a regular case load and will not have lay patients but will focus on priests, deacons, and other religious who face challenges in parish life. Often having multiple parishes to serve, they find it difficult to be there for all the people as they would like. They see a rise in mental health issues especially among young people in the isolation of the shutdown. As Fr. Tom says, if they have no relationship to a Jesus, there is a vacuum. Priests must have time for prayer and the liturgy, but many also need time for learning; for example, Fr. Tom must complete 36 continuing education credits during the three-year registration period for his social worker license. With all of these stressors, priests must be realistic about their own wellbeing in order to avoid burnout.

To this end, Fr. Tom enjoys several activities. He enjoys the Adirondacks and the outdoors, cross country skiing and hiking. He rides his bicycle now that his knees have halted his running. He likes all music (except opera), Italian, Polish, and Middle Eastern food, and Turkish coffee. He enjoys photography, gardening, reading (*Anna Karenina*, the poetry of Mary Oliver, and *Living Buddha, Living Christ* by Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn in particular), movies (especially foreign films), and writing which he has done more of in the pandemic. He enjoys traveling with favorite trips to Alaska, the Holy Land, and Egypt. He is pleased that he will be closer to his sister, brother, and other family members so they can visit.

Fr. Tom's goal as he comes to us is to listen and try to help parishioners heal. People can talk and he will listen. All are carrying a cross, and Fr. Tom will be there to help us keep hope as we walk through our journey and move ahead with our mission. Fr. Tom Konopka is the right man, at the right time, in the right place.

## +Fr. Jerry's Still Life Composition

by Frank Zilinskas



On August 7, 2021, I received an email from Fr. Jerry that contained a photograph of five roses, a pitcher, four peaches and an unshucked ear of corn. It made a beautiful still life picture on his kitchen counter. Fr. Jerry took the photo and sent the email to show me what he had composed.

Last year, Fr. Jerry had received a print of one of my paintings as a gift from Maryann Haskell. It hung in his dining room. After receiving his photo, I asked him if he would mind if I tried to make a painting using his composition. I usually make paintings from my own photos but this one was so beautifully composed that I wanted to try it. Fr. Jerry replied that he would be delighted.

So, on August 14, I began to work on this painting. It takes a while for me to complete a painting and while I was working on it I would occasionally discuss it with Fr. Jerry. On October 7, Eileen, my wife, suggested that I send a photo of the work-in-progress to Fr. Jerry.

He had been hospitalized the previous week and was at home resting. So we sent the photo to Fr. Jerry.

Everyone who knew Fr. Jerry knows that he had a wonderful sense of humor. Once, when he joined us for dinner, I brought him into the studio to show him what I was working on. It was a painting of a very old restored barn at Roseland Park in Woodstock, Connecticut. Fr. Jerry admired it but said it needed a bird in the tree. After that visit we occasionally had Zoom meetings. Whatever painting I was working on at the time was usually in the background. He would always remind me that I needed to add a bird to whatever painting was there.

On October 7, the day before he died, Fr. Jerry responded to the email containing the work-in-progress photo with some very kind words. He finished with "Don't forget the bird!"

The painting is now complete and I did follow his instructions.



## Mark Your Calendars—Holy Saturday, April 8, 2023—The Blessing of the Food

On this year's rainy Holy Saturday afternoon, with the Easter fire burning outside, several parishioners, as well as guests from other parishes, brought their baskets filled with food for the Easter meal to be blessed. Aromas of Easter bread, eggs, hams decorated with pineapple and cloves, sausage, ricotta pie, tiny lambs made of butter, salt, horseradish, wine and candy filled the Gathering Space for the ceremony, presided over by Fr. Martin Fisher.



This ceremony is part of a tradition in the Byzantine Church in which people ask God's blessing on foods that they were prohibited from eating during Lent. Deacon (now Fr.) Mike Melanson, pictured here, started the ceremony at Immaculate Conception and it has been held for twenty-two years with time off for the pandemic. This year, Barbara and Ken Opar are responsible for bringing the ceremony back after a break during the pandemic.

The foods that are brought for blessing carry symbolic meaning directly linking them to Christ. For example, colored eggs are a symbol of the new life in Christ, hope and resurrection. Ham stands for the freedom of the New Law which began with Christ's resurrection. Horseradish reminds us of the bitter suffering of Christ, and, butter, in the shape of a lamb, is a reminder of the Paschal Lamb.

Ken began as the ceremony had always begun here, with participants sharing personal experiences and describing what they have included in their baskets.

Several had been doing this since they were children, in churches across the area. A long-time participant included sausage and horseradish that he had made himself. A visitor talked about growing up in Amsterdam when the neighbors gathered together in one home and the priest came there to bless all their baskets. A nineteen year old young man has been coming here to bless a basket since he was a child. A family with two young children came to have their empty baskets blessed and plan to return next year with baskets full of food for blessing.

Fr. Fisher led us through the service with the singing of "I Am the Bread of Life," a reading from Deuteronomy, intercessions, the Prayer of Blessing: "Bless us and this food of our first Easter meal," and the sprinkling of Holy Water.



Photo of Holy Saturday 2022 by MaryAnn Gawlas

The Blessing of the Food is a simple but powerful ceremony. On a personal level, we continue traditions which have been important to our families and we learn how others have experienced it. As believers, we will eat the blessed food, a sign of the heavenly kingdom which Christ often referred to as a "banquet." Plan to join in next Holy Saturday.

## Spotlight on the Carter Family by Annette Botsford

In this *Pipeline* series, we hope to familiarize parishioners with those among us whom we see often but know little about. Readers are invited to contact Annette Botsford at [annettemarie829@gmail.com](mailto:annettemarie829@gmail.com) with suggestions of future subjects for this feature.

In this newsletter, we've decided to spotlight a family that is involved in our church community.

About seven years ago, Ben and Cindy Carter were "church shopping." They had been attending another church, where both of their children had been baptized. It didn't feel like a community there. Cindy had not been baptized yet but knew she wanted their children to grow up with a faith. Ben agreed to look around with her. They tried a Methodist church where everyone was welcoming, but she found herself missing what the Catholic church offers. After driving by Immaculate Conception so many times, they stepped inside and have never left. They felt incredibly welcome when Father Jerry picked them out right away that day and never forgot them. Cindy started the RCIA program that September. From day one they felt like part of a bigger family. Ben immediately had his Knights of Columbus information sent to Immaculate Conception and was able to start back doing something he loved so much.

Ben and Cindy met in October of 2007 through a mutual friend and hit it off immediately. She said, "The rest is history." They have an 11-year-old son, Benjamin who is about to start middle school and an 8-year-old daughter, Annie.

Cindy grew up in Watervliet, although she was born in Fort Carson, Colorado. She was an army brat. Her dad served in the United States Army for 10 years. After Colorado, they moved to Germany for 3 years. Although she was very young at the time, she still has a few memories from there. They moved back stateside before she started kindergarten. At that time they settled in Watervliet and her younger brother came along. She loved growing up there with the same group of kids from preschool to high school.



She is still friends with some from elementary and high school. From the time she was 16, Cindy worked part time in Hometown Pharmacy in Watervliet and then at the Walmart Pharmacy during and after college. Upon graduation from college, she got a job at First Cardinal as a workers compensation claims adjuster. After three years there, their first child was born. Since then, she has been a stay at home wife and mother. She played the flute from an early age through college and also was a cheerleader. Cindy went to Oneonta State College and graduated in 2006 with a degree in music.

Ben grew up in Fancy Farm, Kentucky (far western tip) with his parents and 2 sisters, one younger and one older. He was lucky enough to have a lot of family around. This was in a small community with a small Catholic church, St. Dennis, where he was an active member. Ben graduated from Hudson Valley

See Carter Family, page 7

### Carter Family, continued from page 6

Community College. He worked for a couple of construction companies before starting his own company a few years ago, Carter Lamansky Construction Inc. During COVID he was able to continue working.

Benjamin has just bridged from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts where he will continue to do his part in helping out in his community. Scouting for Food is just one of the events he likes to participate in. They go around collecting food donations for the food pantry at St. Vincent De Paul. Benjamin is also in Tae kwon Do and recently earned his purple belt. His goal is to become a black belt. He also is participating in the Drama Club and Chorus.

Annie is a Brownie in Girl Scouts where they are learning a lot about being selfless and how to help others. They recently had a trip to the Saratoga Humane Society where they were able to donate food, and present the society with cat boxes that each girl had personally made. Annie also participates in tap, jazz and ballet, which she has been doing since she was about 3 ½ years old. During late summer and into the fall she participates in Spartan Cheer which she has loved.

The whole family is involved with church activities. Ben is a 4<sup>th</sup> degree Knight and is active with the Knights of Columbus at Immaculate Conception. Benjamin is an altar server, who loves and takes his job seriously. Annie can't wait to be an altar server and is super excited about making her First Communion in May. Both children are currently in Faith Formation and have always enjoyed it. Benjamin is looking forward to starting Youth Ministries next year.

One of the things Cindy loves about our church is that kids are always welcome. There was an unforgettable moment when Benjamin, who was probably about 4 years old, jumped off the altar during one of the rites/rituals when Cindy was going to RCIA. She was kneeling on the altar, Ben was behind her with Benjamin next to him while he was holding Annie. Father Jerry was talking and doing a blessing, while Cindy's head was bowed. All she heard was "Benjamin Paul cannon ball!" He took a flying leap down all the stairs!

She said she didn't even have to look up. She knew what he had done. The whole church laughed and even Father was smirking. Father loved that he was comfortable enough in church to be himself.

The family does a bit of travel. Since Ben is from Western Kentucky, they try to take a trip there every summer. Pre pandemic, they would go down for the St. Dennis picnic, which is at the church that Ben grew up in. He would help his father run the snow cone stand, that his grandfather actually built for the church. Sadly, the picnic has not been held in a couple of years due to COVID. Last summer they made a trip to Rhode Island. It was the kids' first time to the ocean. They had a blast. After an amazing Disney World trip in 2018, the family returned during spring break, adding The Wizarding World of Harry Potter to their itinerary.

In their free time, this family loves to go camping and hiking, anything they can do and take their dog, Gus along as well. When they are not out and being active, they enjoy a family day at home. You can usually catch them fairly often making popcorn and gathering blankets for a family movie night. They also love game night...which can either be around the table with a board game or a hard-core Mario Kart game on the Switch.

As with most of us, the Carter family is enjoying getting back to "normal," whatever that may be now. One thing they said they have taken away from the whole pandemic is how lucky and blessed they are. As a stay-at-home mom, Cindy was able to jump right in and get the kids started with distance learning. They realized how amazing their teachers are during this process. As a family they learned that together, they can get through anything.

The Carter family loves being active members of our church. And we are proud and happy to have them as members.



## The Garden of Grace



Plans are underway to establish the Garden of Grace, a garden in memory of Father Jerry to be located on the north side of the church across from the Rectory. Spearheaded by trustees Maryann Haskell and Frank Zilinskas, a committee, consisting of Master Gardeners Marge Rizzo and Mary Powers along with parishioners Annette Botsford, and Marge Bananzewski, has been working on plans for the garden in consultation with Fr. Jerry's family and Kulak's Nursery. Father's secret garden which was highlighted on a Tuesday chat has provided inspiration for the design. See [Tuesday Chat with Fr Jerry - Episode 13 - July 7, 2020 - YouTube](#).



In this thirty-fourth issue of the *Parish Pipeline*, some of our ministries have updated their activities. Immaculate Conception is fortunate to have many more ministries which will be highlighted in coming issues. For a complete list of ministries,

- see the church website: <http://www.icglenville.com>
- contact Maryann Haskell, 399-6706, e-mail [maryann.haskell@gmail.com](mailto:maryann.haskell@gmail.com)
- fill in the information below and drop it in the collection basket. You will be contacted.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in the following ministry/ministries:

**July 16-17:**  
Distribution of the next issue of the Pipeline

**July 6:** Submissions due