

# Good Stewards

United in faith, we bring the Reign of the Sacred Heart to the world.

## A message from Fr. Dominic

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday, I would like to share one aspect of that Mercy.

One night in 1935, Fiorello LaGuardia, the mayor of New York, showed up at a night court in the poorest ward in the city. One case involved an elderly woman who was caught stealing bread to feed her grandchildren. LaGuardia said, "I've got to punish you. Ten dollars or 10 days in jail." As he spoke, he threw \$10 into his hat and fined everyone in the courtroom 50-cents for living in a city, "where an old woman had to steal bread so her grandchildren should not starve." The woman left the courtroom with her fine paid and an additional \$47.50!

He showed her mercy, forgiveness and love.

We can say, "mercy, forgiveness and love" repeatedly.

During this Easter Season, let us, as Easter people, put those words into action!

Amen. Alleluia!

*Fr. Dominic*

## From Humble Roots to Lasting Impact

One of the great joys Fr. Dominic and Pam have is visiting with donors, whose faith, spirit and support invigorate the entire SCJ community. They are partners in our mission and ministry.

Aloysius (Al) Merges is one friend we won't soon forget.

Al was born Dec. 8, 1924, on the family farm in rural Dubuque County, IA, the youngest of 10 children to Peter and Catherine Merges.

His father, Peter, was an immigrant from Luxembourg, and his mother, Catherine, was also of Luxembourg descent, making Luxembourgish the primary language in the Merges household. Al spoke Luxembourgish throughout his life, taking great pride in his heritage.

Al attended a rural one-room school near his home. He grew up during the Great Depression, which shaped his lifelong habit of avoiding waste. His Catholic faith was at the heart of his life and his generosity was unmatched. Al lived a quiet, humble life filled with hard work and prayer.

From a young age, Al worked on the family farm, milking cows and caring for pigs before and after school. After completing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, he worked full-time on the farm, managing it with his brother Henry until their parents passed

away. The two brothers eventually bought the farm and worked it together until they retired. Even after retiring, Al remained active, caring for the farm, painting, cutting grass, or doing whatever needed to be done well into his early 90s.



*Al and Fr. Dominic during a visit to his home.*

"Al was known for his kindness, his caring nature and his great sense of humor. He loved dogs, especially blue heelers, and deeply loved music, particularly polka and country western tunes. His life was a

testament to hard work, faith and family," shared Al's nephew Keith, his caregiver, friend and biggest fan.

Throughout Al's lifetime, his generosity was evident in his constant prayers, offering Masses and extending healing support to others. His deep faith and dedication to helping those in need continued even after his passing in 2024, as he left a lasting legacy to the Priests of the Sacred Heart and other beloved charities. His devotion to serving others remains an inspiration to all who knew him.

*If you would like information on how to leave a legacy to the Priests of the Sacred Heart, please give our Mission Advancement staff a call at 1-866-268-0157.*

## Making Charitable Giving Easy

We often hear from our friends that they learned about the Priests of the Sacred Heart and Sacred Heart Monastery from their mothers. The same is true for Anne Marie.

Anne Marie's mother, Joan, supported the Priests of the Sacred Heart for nearly 30 years until she passed. Following in her mother's footsteps, Anne Marie is dedicated to supporting the Priests of the Sacred Heart. She contributes to our missions in the U.S. and around the world, as well as the



seminary and care for elderly priests — all in her mother's memory.

Anne Marie set up a Donor Advised Fund (DAF) to manage and track her charitable giving years ago.

"My husband and I are retired and blessed to be able to fund a DAF to support and expand our charitable giving. Using a DAF has made the process of donating and tracking our contributions very easy," she shared.

*If you would like more information on how you can set up a DAF to make your charitable giving as easy and efficient as Anne Marie, please contact our Mission Advancement Department at 1-866-268-0157 or [missionadv@poshusa.org](mailto:missionadv@poshusa.org).*

## Express Lasting Love with a Lasting Tribute

We all have people in our lives who have special significance. Those who raised us, taught us, protected us and lifted us with their love. We hold these people dearly in our hearts and in our prayers.

One way you ensure they are not forgotten is by honoring them with a meaningful gift to the Priests of the Sacred Heart. With your gift, you can memorialize a loved one, or commemorate a special occasion such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, a birthday, graduation or anniversary. You can give a gift to express appreciation for someone's special kindness or to recognize his or her impact on your life.

Whatever the reason for the gift, be assured this expression of

the goodness of Jesus will touch the lives of the poor and needy through works of love and mercy.

To arrange for your special gift, get answers to your questions or learn about larger gift opportunities, such as building or educational endowments, please contact our Mission Advancement Department at 1-866-268-1057 or [missionadv@poshusa.org](mailto:missionadv@poshusa.org).

While choosing a gift for someone special in your life, what could be more meaningful than a gift celebrating your devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? I invite you to prayerfully consider a gift that helps support our vital ministries. We are happy to help you find the right gift that reflects your most heartfelt intentions.

### There are several gift choices:

- ✚ Dedicate a window at the Sacred Heart Monastery.



- ✚ Engrave a brick in the Sacred Heart Shrine Memorial Garden.



- ✚ Engrave a leaf, rock or dove on one of our Memorial Trees.





# We Need Your Prayers and Material Support

*Present is six parish communities in Ukraine, the confreres who work there tell us about the mission of the Priests of the Sacred Heart in this war-torn country.*

The Priests of the Sacred Heart in Ukraine thanks you for your prayers and material support. This year, our group has grown by one confrere. Fr. Jerzy Wilk (expelled from Belarus after more than 20 years of pastoral service in that country) has joined us in Ukraine. He will serve in Irpin. Currently, we are nine SCJ confreres, working in six locations across Ukraine. These locations, our parishes, as our ministry in Ukraine is primarily parish-based, are situated in the Zhytomyr and Kyiv regions (Oblasti).

Our pastoral and Dehonian ministry in Ukraine is carried out primarily through parish management. In addition to the main parishes, we also serve nearby parishes and chapels.

Beyond this, however, our activity also includes some special pastoral ministries. We are engaged in parish missions and organize gatherings for the youth and altar servers of our parishes. We have two centers where these meetings can be organized and are held periodically.

Due to the current challenges in Ukraine, we are also compelled to organize humanitarian aid for those in need, particularly in areas affected by the war.

In addition to our pastoral duties, we are involved in construction projects. We are building a church in Irpin, near Kyiv, and a rectory in Miropol, in the Zhytomyr region. The church in Irpin now has a roof, windows and most external doors. Essentially, the building shell is complete, with only interior finishing work remaining. The rectory in Miropol is also nearly finished, with only the finishing touches left. Additionally, we are assisting with various smaller renovations and improvement projects in the churches entrusted to us.

Our main problem now is the ongoing war. Although direct hostilities are far from us, we still feel their effects. The first is the military mobilization of men, with its ensuing tragedies: death, severe injuries and lengthy recoveries. These effects sometime result in long-lasting psychological trauma affecting families and society. To address this, we run small spiritual counseling clinics in our parishes. For more complex cases, we refer individuals to specialists. We also notice in our parishes many children needing care, left orphaned without fathers because the war has taken them away forever.

Another issue is the frequent power outages, sometimes lasting up to six hours a day.

To carry out all this work, we need prayer and material support. We thank all the Confreres of the Congregation for the assistance we have received. First and foremost, we thank you for your financial support of our construction projects. Sincerely, thank you very much!

*May God bless you!*





# Pastoral Year Enhances Seminarian's Commitment

*"I was reminded of the beauty and strength that faith can provide.*

*I am realizing how profoundly ministry connects me to people's lives." — Frater Truc Tran, SCJ*



*Frater Truc Tran, SCJ*

*The following is written by Frater Truc Tran, SCJ, a seminarian doing his pastoral year in South Dakota.*

I have studied philosophy, theology and the intricacies of the Church's history, traditions, liturgy and scripture in the seminary for several years.

As I embarked on my pastoral year, I understood it was time

to leave the safety of the academic walls and embrace the reality of ministry in a local church/community. This year is dedicated to hands-on learning, living and understanding what it truly means to serve as a shepherd to God's people.

I was assigned to St. Joseph's Indian School, a vibrant institution located in the small town of Chamberlain, SD. Before the assignment, I had time to discern which location would fit my pastoral year. After a few weeks of prayer and reflection, I chose South Dakota. South Dakota was where I did summer ministry two years ago. I explained to my formation director that I wanted to learn more about Native American culture, particularly the Lakota (Sioux).

Arriving in South Dakota, I received the warmest welcome from our community, students, staff and employees of St. Joseph's Indian School. My first days were filled with excitement and nervousness as I looked through the staff directory, which included over 300 people! I wondered, "How can I get to know all of them in just one year?"

My mentor is Fr. Greg Schill, SCJ, the chaplain of the school and the Spiritual Director of St. Joseph's Development Office. Fr. Greg's warmth immediately put me at ease, and he emphasized that this pastoral year is an opportunity for me to learn, listen and grow close to people in the community. I also received guidance from the late Dr. Richard Barton, a previous residential trainer for grades 1-6 at the school. He was a seasoned and kindhearted man known for his storytelling and deep love for the St. Joseph's community.

My days are filled with various tasks: assisting with daily Mass, training and leading the altar servers on Sundays, visiting students' homes, participating in nearly all school events and religious classes after Sunday Mass to support the high school students and writing weekly prayers for social media.

Initially, I was unsure how to connect with Native American children, but I learned that my genuine approach made a significant difference. I am now building relationships with the people at the school, who sometimes open up to me about their joys and questions about faith. The experience is challenging, but I listen as best as possible.

While my ministry primarily focuses on St. Joseph's Indian School, I also spend some time in Lower Brule, SD, to support Dehonian Frs. Christianus Hendrik and Jean-Claude Mbassi and the pastoral team, including Dn. Steven McLaughlin and Sisters Yollie Nobabos and Clary Joy Palasan.

As the pastoral year progresses, I want to engage more deeply with the realities of ministry. I am dedicating more time to visiting students in their homes, offering prayers and listening to their life stories to understand them better. These experiences help me connect Native American traditions and the Catholic faith.

The pastoral year is filled with moments of discernment. I questioned whether I was called to this life. I have discovered that my role was not to have all the answers but to be a presence and a vessel of God's love. Additionally, the pastoral year provides an excellent opportunity to explore Fr. Dehon's spirituality deeply and discern my relationship with God in my vocation. Each day, my love for the people and God's calling deepens. My heart expands to understand that ministry becomes more abundant when grounded in humility and compassion.

I am eager and joyful about the next steps. I am coming to know the people of St. Joseph's — sharing in their joys, griefs and faith. I am developing close relationships with many who are both friends and spiritual guides.

These few months have taught me invaluable lessons: ministry is about meeting people where they are, compassion can be more potent than words, and faith flourishes through service. I realize my journey is just beginning, but the experiences from this pastoral year provide me with a foundation to carry forward.

The pastoral year is a time of discovery, growth and deepening faith. It is transforming my understanding of ministry and is bringing me closer to the essence of God's calling.

I feel ready, as much as anyone can be, to serve God's people, one day and one encounter at a time.

## Memories of Mother Teresa

Years ago, Fr. Dominic was the pastor of Christ the Redeemer parish in Houston and married John and Catherine, long-time parishioners who had met through the church's singles group. The couple remained in contact with Fr. Dominic after he moved and when another wedding brought them to the Milwaukee area, he encouraged them to visit. It was an opportunity for them to see firsthand the letters they had heard about from Mother Teresa to one of our Dehonian priests: Fr. Michael van der Peet.

After meeting at a bus stop in Rome, Fr. Michael and Mother Teresa became good friends. They remained in contact until Mother Teresa's death in 1997. Fr. Michael later served on the team that prepared the cause for her beatification, and in 2003, was present in Rome for the beatification ceremony at St. Peter's.



*The letters from Mother Teresa remain in our Provincial Archives. Fr. Wayne Jenkins, provincial archivist, is pictured here (red shirt) with Fr. Dominic, John and Catherine reviewing them.*



## Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake is Like Family

Sacred Heart at Monastery Lake is an apartment complex that provides a welcoming home for our retired and active priests and brothers, as well as local community members 50 years of age or older. Conveniently located across the street from Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology and Sacred Heart Monastery, it offers a supportive community environment.

Built in 2012, the complex was designed to house the growing needs of our retirement community, active priests and brothers. There is room for 36 senior Priests of the Sacred Heart on the first three floors of the north wing. There is room for 10 SCJs who are still active in ministry to live in community on the fourth floor. There are also 138 apartments for local senior residents in the middle and southern sections of the complex. Twenty percent of the apartments are reserved for low-income residents.

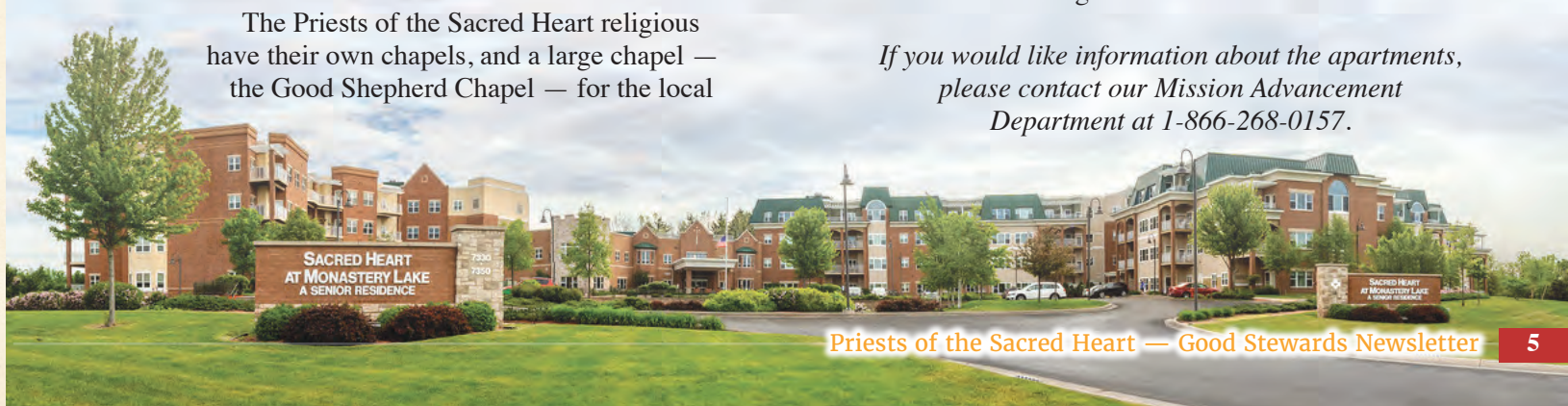
The Priests of the Sacred Heart religious have their own chapels, and a large chapel — the Good Shepherd Chapel — for the local

senior residents that is served by our retired priests and brothers with the help of some of our residents.

In addition to offering one- and two-bedroom apartments equipped with appliances, some unique features include:

- Coffee Bar and Internet Cafe
- Convenience Store with Room Service
- Beauty and Barber Shop
- Four Seasons Room
- Heated Underground Parking
- Balconies and Patios In Select Units
- Cable Package Included
- Central Air Conditioning
- Generous Closet Space
- Chapel with Daily Services
- Weekday Continental Breakfast
- Additional Storage

*If you would like information about the apartments, please contact our Mission Advancement Department at 1-866-268-0157.*





# Is It Time to Change the Way You Give?

The New Year has begun, taxes have been filed and now may be the time to change the way you give!

Here are some ways to give that may benefit you and your favorite charities, like the Priests of the Sacred Heart:

- **Start a Donor Advised Fund:** A Donor Advised Fund is a fund established by an individual who contributes cash or assets to a public charity. The fund can be established through a local community foundation, a nonprofit organization or a commercial sponsor such as a mutual fund company or a brokerage firm. As a donor, you will receive three tax benefits:
  1. An immediate income tax deduction
  2. Avoidance of a capital gain if the gift is from appreciated property
  3. Reduction of the gross estate

You will also have the knowledge and philanthropic satisfaction of helping your favorite charity for years.

- **Name the Priests of the Sacred Heart as a beneficiary of your retirement plan:** While taxable to loved ones, these assets are tax-free when given to a nonprofit.
- **Give from your IRA:** If you are 70½ and required to take minimum distributions, regardless of whether you itemize your taxes, a direct distribution to a charity helps you fulfill your required minimum distribution and is not considered taxable income.
- **Establish a Charitable Gift Annuity:** The Priests of the Sacred Heart has offered a charitable gift annuity for over 80 years. This annuity offers a fixed, lifetime income with additional tax savings and special Mass remembrances.

## What does this mean for the Priests of the Sacred Heart?

Your gift can educate men for the priesthood, who will work among the poor by providing clean water, food, clothing and sharing the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. With your gift, more children will be offered a free education to help them escape poverty.

Please know that our priests, brothers, seminarians and the children and families served by our ministries gratefully appreciate your generosity and support.

*At any time, please feel free to contact our Mission Advancement Department at [missionadv@poshusa.org](mailto:missionadv@poshusa.org) or by phone at 1-866-268-0157 to discuss how your gift can help further our mission.*

*\*This information is not professional tax or legal advice; please consult your tax advisor about your specific situation.*