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The Compass

IN THE

Bulletin

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Cancer scare changed her life

Elmer says experience inspires her to do more for others

BY JEAN PEERENBOOM | FOR THE COMPASS

APPLETON — Fifteen minutes changed Sarah and Jonathan Elmer's lives forever this year.

Sarah Elmer had a cancer scare that brought a new awareness to their personal and spiritual lives. She begins her story with her discovery of a "very tiny" lump in her thigh that wasn't really noticeable, but she thought it should be checked out just to reassure herself it wasn't anything to worry about. Her doctor had checked it a few times and wasn't concerned — at first.

Elmer's concern didn't go away. "My husband is a hospice grief counselor and I'm in parish ministry work. I feel surrounded by people who deal with this kind of thing. So, I pushed it with my doctor," she said.

"I had an X-ray in fall, then an MRI to be sure," Elmer explained. "A couple hours later, I got a call to come in and see the doctor for the results. I knew that couldn't be good. I found a babysitter and we went in. I didn't expect to hear, 'It's cancer.'"

"When I heard soft-tissue sarcoma, I felt like I was in another world," she said. There were so many emotions, yet she didn't really feel much. "It was so overwhelming."

About a week and a half later, the Elmers had gotten insurance clearance and found a specialist in Milwaukee. She had a biopsy on a Wednesday



KATHY WEIGMAN | FOR THE COMPASS

Sarah Elmer, a member of Holy Spirit Parish in Kimberly, said a cancer scare had an impact on her prayer life. "My petition went from asking God to fix it to asking to feel God's presence."

and had to wait until Friday for results.

"Those were the worst days of my life," she said. "All I could think of was 'stage one.' Anything else couldn't be cured." Finally the call came. It was 4:30 p.m. "They said, 'It's not cancer.'"

Read the full story in our Dec. 19, 2014, issue.

FRANKLY,
FRANCIS



A society without mothers would be a dehumanized society, for mothers are always, even in the worst moments, witnesses of tenderness, dedication and moral strength. Mothers often pass on the deepest sense of religious practice: in a human being's life, the value of faith is inscribed in the first prayers, the first acts of devotion that a child learns. Without mothers, not only would there be no new faithful, but the faith would lose a good part of its simple and profound warmth.

Dearest mothers, thank you, thank you for what you are in your family and for what you give to the church and the world. ... And to you, Mary, Mother of God, thank you for letting us see Jesus.

+ Pope Francis,
Jan. 7, 2015

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Zerkels say birth of daughter with Down syndrome brought added challenges, faith

BY PATRICIA KASTEN | THE COMPASS

KAUKAUNA — A new child always brings challenges to a family. When that child is born with Down syndrome, there are added challenges.

For the Zerkel family of Kaukauna, their new baby also brought added faith. On Oct. 29, 2013, Brent and Katy Zerkel welcomed their third child, Gabriella Rose (Gabby).

Ultrasounds had revealed some abnormalities in the vessels of her brain in utero. Her first moments confirmed that she had Down syndrome and she spent three weeks in neonatal intensive care.

Brent reacted as any father would: "I just felt kind of in shock and was asking the question, 'Why can't she just be a normal child?'" he said. "It took a few weeks for me to understand what I was feeling and what to expect in the future. I talked with Katy about it. Then I realized it was all going to be OK. Now I can't imagine life without her. She's just the best baby ever. She brings us so much joy and happiness."

For Katy, newborn Gabby was beautiful and exactly as God wanted her to be. Brent remembers Katy's response: "She was so excited and joyful."

Read the full story in our Jan. 23 issue.



KATHY WEIGMAN | FOR THE COMPASS

Gabriella Rose (Gabby) Zerkel was born Oct. 29, 2013.

5 things you need to know about: CRS Rice Bowl

- 1 CRS Rice Bowl is a project of Catholic Relief Services.
- 2 It is a Lenten faith formation program for use in parishes, schools, religious education and by families and individuals.
- 3 CRS Rice Bowl was previously known as Operation Rice Bowl. The program name was changed in 2012.
- 4 The Rice Bowl campaign collects about \$8 million annually, with 25 percent of funds staying in local diocesan communities to fight hunger.
- 5 CRS Rice Bowl asks participants to do three things:
PRAY to deepen their relationship with God.
FAST to remove the things that get between us and God.
GIVE ALMS to our brothers and sisters.

Learn more at www.crsricebowl.org



PHASE I: FORMATION IN PRAYER AND HOLINESS

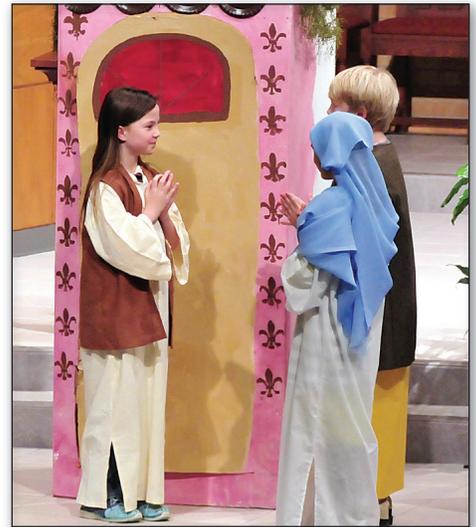


Bishop David Ricken

The first two years (2014-2016) will be called "Formation in Prayer and Holiness." I want us all to focus very clearly on the call to renew our prayer lives by establishing and deepening our relationship with Jesus Christ and his holy church.

This will mean spending more time as individuals and as families coming to love the Sunday Mass, which is the heart of our life as Catholic Christians. It will also mean praying for anyone among our families, our friends and our parishioners who have drifted away from the regular practice of the Catholic faith, and praying for their return or regular nourishment at the table of God's Word and the table of the Eucharist.

I will be preparing a pastoral reflection for the first two years which will concentrate on the call to prayer and holiness. It will mean helping our parishes, our schools, our prayer groups, and our ministries to be transformed into real schools of prayer over the next two years. In other words, we will continue doing many of the things we are already doing, discontinue some of the things we are currently



Parish SNAPSHOT

Joseph and Mary, played by Keegan Polomis and Kelsey Seymour, are greeted by the final innkeeper played by Hanna Thiry during Holy Family Parish's faith formation Christmas play in Marinette.

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Email your high resolution digital photo to us at compassnews@gbdioc.org.

doing, and re-enforce all of our activities and dispositions by focusing on our prayer lives, answering the call to holiness. We will deepen our own prayerful journey with our Lord and also teach others to pray.

Next month: Phase II Formation in Discipleship

Prayer is focus of gathering held in Brillion

BY AMANDA LAUER | FOR THE COMPASS

BRILLION — Disciples on the Way is an invitation from Bishop David Ricken to Catholics in the Green Bay Diocese to embark on a missionary journey into the new evangelization.

The pilot program for the first section (Formation in Prayer and Holiness) was held Saturday, Dec. 13, at Holy Family Church. Bishop Ricken was there to share his personal reflection on how individuals and communities can grow in prayer through the next two years.

"I would like to invite everyone to a journey; a journey of deepening our prayer life, of learning to be better disciples ourselves and of

making disciples of others for the sake of the kingdom of God," said Bishop Ricken.

The event was divided into three parts: Teach My People to Pray; The Holy Name of Jesus; and Wrap Yourself in God's Word: Lectio Divina.

Bishop Ricken shared some statistics about the Green Bay Diocese, including the fact that 64 percent of the regular church goers can't describe a personal relationship with Jesus.

Two remaining days of prayer will be held in 2015: Feb. 21 at St. Mary Church in Wau-paca and March 28 at Holy Cross Church in Kaukauna. To register call (920) 272-8194 or go to www.gbdioc.org/dayofprayer.

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