



# The Heartbeat

A Publication of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church  
[www.ihmparish.com](http://www.ihmparish.com)

Spring/Summer 2020

## WELCOME HOME!

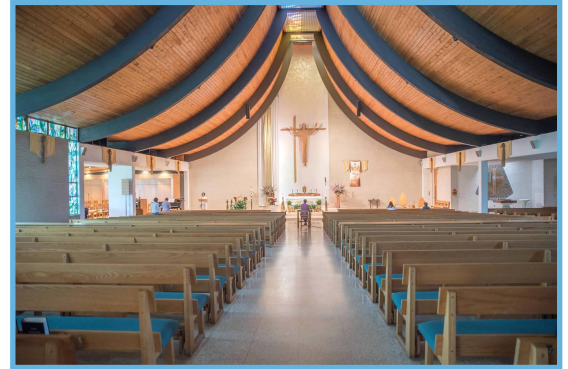
by Deb Moore

After a multi-week hiatus from our physical presence in church to help stem the tide of the COVID-19, we are finally reunited with our parish family, albeit in an altered way. Many protocols and restrictions will be in place for an undetermined amount of time and right now it may be difficult to imagine when we can freely walk into church and interact as before. But for now, welcome home!

The last weekend of regular Masses at IHM was March 7/8, the Second Week of Lent. Then came the Governor's Stay Home, Stay Safe order. The following Sunday morning many of us participated in the weekly live-streamed 10:00 Mass from the Cathedral of St. Andrew. By the time Easter arrived, IHM was ready to produce its own weekly 11:00 liturgy, debuting with Palm Sunday Mass on April 5 with **Fr. Troy Nevins** presiding. Seminarian Intern **David Jameson** was instrumental in making the live-streamed Masses happen each week from a technical standpoint—no easy task—while **Jane Eggleston**, Stewardship and Communications Coordinator, did the actual filming with an iPad.

Fr. Troy is proud the parish has not laid off or furloughed any staff. He said, "IHM applied early for a small business loan, which we received. The Finance Council affirmed we've been acting conservatively for the last number of years and that we were going to take care of our people."

You may wonder what the IHM staff has been doing over these past many stressful weeks. The short answer: They've been busy behind the scenes, working to help members stay linked to their parish family.



*Set-up for the weekly live-streamed Mass*

## PARISH STAFF

The three primary platforms for connecting with parishioners are IHM's website, the My Parish app, and our Facebook page. If you want information, you'll find it there. Indeed, many use these platforms on a regular basis anyway, and have continued to do so while sheltering in place. **Parish Secretary Janet Potoczny** has composed the weekly bulletin which has been posted on the website. David Jameson produced some light-hearted "Sheltering in Place" videos on the Facebook page and also created a Blog which is available on the website; you may leave prayer intentions there, as well. Ten staff and seminarians divided up the parish membership list and made personal phone calls to every person officially registered at IHM, inquiring after their welfare and offering to pray with them. Parishioner **Peggy Campbell** discovered the idea of taking photos of parishioners on their front porches, and implemented the "IHM Porch Project" utilizing her photography skills. The photos are found on our Facebook page with Jane Eggleston acting as conduit.

Fr. Troy's pastoral duties continued despite the pandemic. Although many couples postponed their wedding plans, he performed two weddings in church with ten people or less in attendance. For one of those, in lieu of a reception, the newlyweds' friends and family packed the parking lot, honking and showing their love. Four funerals have been held graveside. He has done numerous sick visits to hospitals, nursing homes and private homes, wearing protective gear as mandated. "One bright side of a sad situation," said Fr. Troy, "is that families of those dying at home with Hospice services have often been off work and more available to spend those final days with their loved ones."

It's taken awhile for Fr. Troy to get used to the weekly Mass live-streamed Masses. "It's so odd, preaching to no one," he laughed. "It's out of my comfort zone. But it keeps the connection alive and parishioners have been happy to participate in Mass from their own church."

Staff has been creative with their jobs. **Business Administrator Barb Heinbeck** staffs the office in the mornings and Janet Potoczny is there in the afternoons. Weekly church support was, and always is, an important factor in our financial health, and on-line giving has been so right for this time. (Contact Barb at the office if you'd like to switch your giving from the collection basket to an on-line option.)

**Maintenance staff Doug Nowak and John Potoczny** finally have time to perform fix-it projects that have been on the back burner for a while.

**Youth Minister Stefanie Iwan** has provided middle school EDGE students and families resources through [Formed.org](https://formed.org) to watch and discuss together. She has offered ProjectYM, a virtual youth group where students can hear internationally-known Catholic speakers and participate in praise and worship. In addition, Stefanie is hosting a weekly Zoom book study of "The Screwtape Letters" by C. S. Lewis for our high school students. Moving forward, high school leaders and core teams for both groups will share their testimonies on "Testimony (Taco) Tuesdays."

For her part, **Pastoral Assistant Pricilla Baldwin** has followed her usual routine with increased phone calls and emails to families and individuals over sacramental concerns, such as how First Communion might happen. She continues to speak with those interested in the Catholic faith and provide support for many in our Burmese community. Pricilla recommends prayer and scripture, great habits for any time.

## MUSIC

**Director of Liturgical Music, Jane VanHouten**, rallied to Fr. Troy's call to "be creative" with her position. Early in March, she took inspiration from international composer/musician Eric Whitacre's virtual YouTube choirs that featured as many as 800 voices, challenging IHM's Choir to make a similar recording. She knew a virtual choir was the perfect vehicle to bring the choir into our homes for the Easter Vigil.

With just three weeks until April 11, she chose *Do Not Be Afraid* by Philip Stopford and Gerard Markland as the perfect song. "It's about baptism," said Jane, (think RCIA candidates being brought into the Church) "and so reassuring during this scary time of COVID-19." Phrases such as *You are mine, I am at your side*, and *You are precious in my eyes*, all express God's never-ending love for His people.

Then Jane produced a private YouTube video with a practice track and a performance track. She extended an invitation to all choir members, as well as many former choir members, to participate. The response was powerful: 48 voices, two violinists, 1 violist, 1 cellist and 1 oboist made individual recordings and uploaded them to a Google doc account.

Parishioners **Jackie Gipe** and **Jacob VanHouten** engineered the finished product; Jackie handled the audio while Jacob did the video.

"It was hours and hours of work," said Jane, "and I am so grateful for their skills."

If you haven't seen the video, go to IHM's Facebook page for the link. It's a tear-inducing listen, with over 2.8K views. On April 19, Jane was featured speaking about it on the 100th episode of the podcast *Ministry Monday* produced by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians.

The results were so positive that the choir will make a second virtual music video for Pentecost, May 31, singing *Holy Spirit, Living Breath of God* by Keith Getty. This time the children's choir is invited to participate, too.

In addition, Jane has presented music for each live-streamed Mass, working with Fr. Troy to make it as "normal" as possible. For Jane, the uncertainty of when and how the choir can return to its ministry has been most unsettling.



*Our choir, performing from home and brought together by technology—heavenly!*



## SCHOOL



*School Library Media Specialist Wendy Kuzma organized two Spirit Weeks, encouraging students to dress to a theme and email in their photos.*

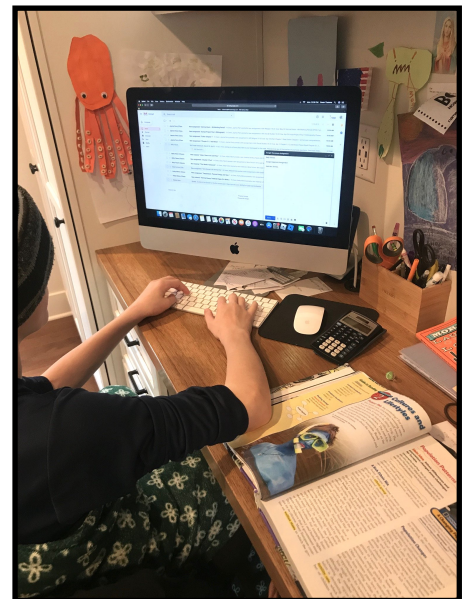
After spring break, when they knew school would be closed for the rest of the year, most teachers began using Seesaw for grades 1-4 and Google Classroom for grades 5-8. All grades use Zoom to meet with their students once or twice a week and some of the middle school teachers have regular office hours on Zoom for students to check in and ask questions. Zoom is also used for socialization. In some cases, teachers delivered packets of work or school books to student homes.

In place of the usual gathering of all students in the halls each Monday morning to start the week, Holly comes into students' homes via a Facebook Live video with the Gospel reading and announcements. **Marketing and Recruitment Secretary Colleen Lowe** emails that information Tuesdays through Fridays.

Holly said, "Students are doing a great job with completing their assignments and maintaining grade level pace. Everyone wants to get back to school, but we're making do. The parents have been so very helpful. I'm really impressed with the teachers, staff and parish. They've stepped up to do everything they can to help. It's been amazing!"

For **Principal Holly Lake**, her first year at IHM School has been full of surprises. "Friday, March 13 was a scheduled day off from school," said Holly. "When the students were dismissed on Thursday, we did not know they would not be returning on Monday." The governor's Stay Home, Stay Safe order closed all schools for three weeks beginning on the 16th.

Staff's immediate task was to figure out how to teach long distance for those three weeks. (At the time, no one knew how long the closure would last.) They began by creating packets for distribution and sending assignments home via email, then expanded to video lessons. The teachers strove to learn potential new ways to deliver lessons to their students online via platforms kids could access in a safe way.



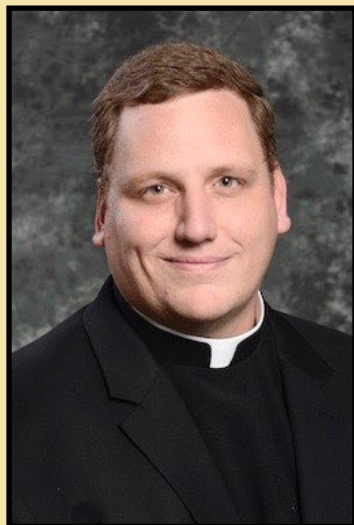
*Students worked diligently to complete their school work from home.*

## COMMUNITY

Over the past weeks, parish staff has discussed and researched various ideas for *what* Phase 1 of returning to church in a safe environment would look like. The *when* and *how* will be determined by the timing of the Governor's re-opening of the state and the directives of Grand Rapids' Bishop David Walkowiak. Amid the uncertainty, IHM's staff continues to wrestle with planning summer and fall activities for a future with lots of unknowns. What we do know is that IHM parishioners long for their spiritual home and are eager for a return to normalcy. To that happy day, we lift up our voices in prayer.

# Q & A

with Seminarian Intern  
**David Jameson**  
with Khue Dinh



Q: PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR PERSONAL CONVERSION STORY.

**A:** I was born in Louisiana. My father is a Southern Baptist pastor, and for several years my parents served as Southern Baptist missionaries in Jerusalem. They instilled in me a deep faith in Christ and led by example, teaching me what it means to trust and follow Him.

After missionary experiences with Catholicism in Malta and Indonesia, I moved to Virginia as a graduate student at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. I stumbled into a Mass for the first time one Sunday when a friend needed a ride to church, and I immediately saw parallels between the Mass and the model of church I had practiced in Indonesia. I spent a year attending Mass and reading everything I could about Catholicism, especially the Eucharist.

As I learned more about the faith and became more convinced of its truth, I became increasingly concerned about the consequences I would face should I decide to become Catholic. I knew everything would change—my studies and graduate assistant position would cease at Liberty University—and I would lose relationships important to me, those with my girlfriend and friends. The most difficult of all was the pain I knew my conversion would inflict on my parents.

While attending the *Defending the Faith Conference* at Franciscan University in Steubenville, I finally ceased wrestling with what my belief in the Eucharist and conversion to Catholicism would mean. As the priest processed with the Eucharist toward my section during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, I received clear understanding that ultimately it didn't matter what my family and friends would think. I thought, "At worst, I would be taking Jesus at His word. How can they fault me for that?" And with that, I knelt and cried. That experience helped me understand that there are consequences that accompany faith and belief; taking Christ at His word, believing Him and living out of faith in Him should change us and be something for which we are willing to sacrifice.

I entered RCIA the next month and came into the Church the next year during the Easter Vigil of 2012. Two years later I began discerning the vocation of the priesthood, and began my seminary formation in 2016.

Q: DUE TO THE PANDEMIC, MOST OF LENT WAS SPENT AT HOME THIS YEAR. HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE EXPERIENCE?

**A:** Like most everyone, I found it to be an emotional time, one full of disappointment, confusion, frustration, anger, and even fear. But I have also experienced joys and consolations during this time in the desert, unable to encounter and receive Him in the Mass. It's been a time to grow in union and relationship with the Lord in other ways. We ultimately return to Mass more eager and ready to receive Him.

————— *Continued on page 5* —————

Q: WHAT IS ONE VITAL PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE YOU WOULD PASS ON TO SOMEONE DISCERNING RELIGIOUS LIFE?

A: Discerning a vocation isn't about you as much as it is about determining what God wills for you. As seminarians, we ask ourselves "in what way am I called to die, to give of myself completely, so that Christ may live through me?"

The greatest image of our Catholic faith, one that has always spoken to me, even as a Baptist, is the crucifix. Every crucifix depicts the image of our Lord's self-giving, self-sacrificing love. Through His crucifixion He is spent, completely consumed, in giving Himself for all. I believe this is the image that best communicates the meaning of every vocation, whether marriage, consecrated religious life or to the priesthood.

***David's internship at IHM ends on July 31. We wish his time with us could have been different, but thank him for his many efforts on our behalf. Good luck going forward, David!***

## Email Addresses Needed!

If you haven't provided the parish with your email address for communication purposes, please send an email to Janet at [secretary@ihmparish.com](mailto:secretary@ihmparish.com) for yours to be added to the list. Your email address will never be used for purposes other than direct contact from the parish or be shared with a third party.

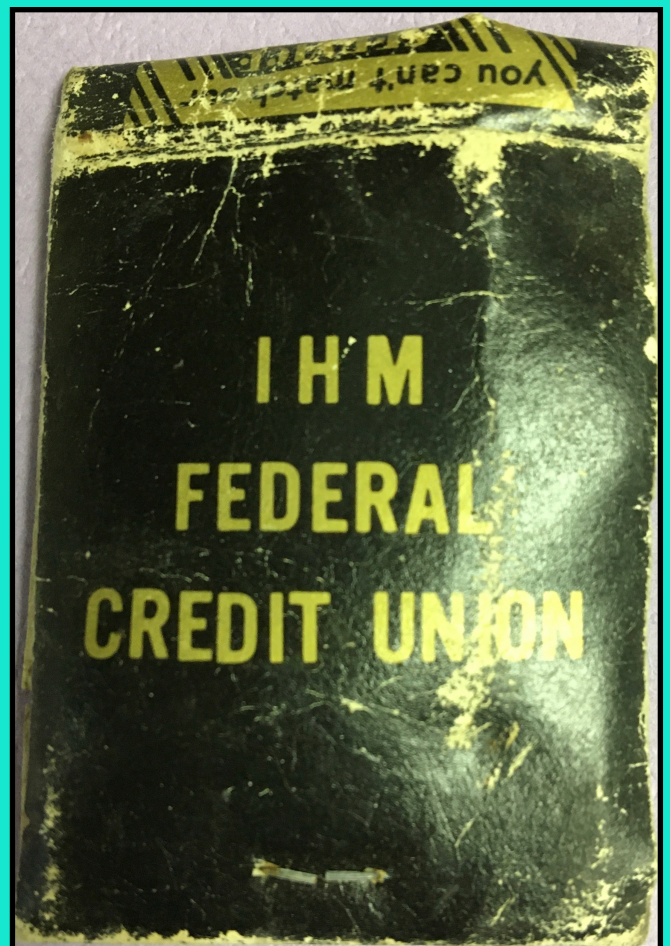
## Did You Know?

IHM School's enrollment reached its peak in 1964 with 535 students. Two years later a new Diocese policy capped the maximum number of students per classroom to 40.

The first Mass was said in our current church at 7:15 A.M. on August 28, 1966 with Pastor Charles Killgoar, OMI officiating.

The Killgoar Foundation was formed in 1987 to lend financial support to our school. Over time and through the generosity of donors, the Foundation has gifted over \$1 million to IHM School, helping countless families with tuition assistance as well as keeping tuition as low as possible for all students.

IHM operated its own Credit Union from 1953-1977, when it merged with the United Catholic Federal Credit Union. The financial establishment was first located in the Parish Hall (the basement of the original Rectory), then had an office in the Convent. The Credit Union moved off our property to a converted home on Eastern Ave., close to the corner of Alger, about a year before the merger.



*The back of this matchbook advertised IHM's Credit Union.*



# THE GAZE OF CHRIST

By Kristin Ferro

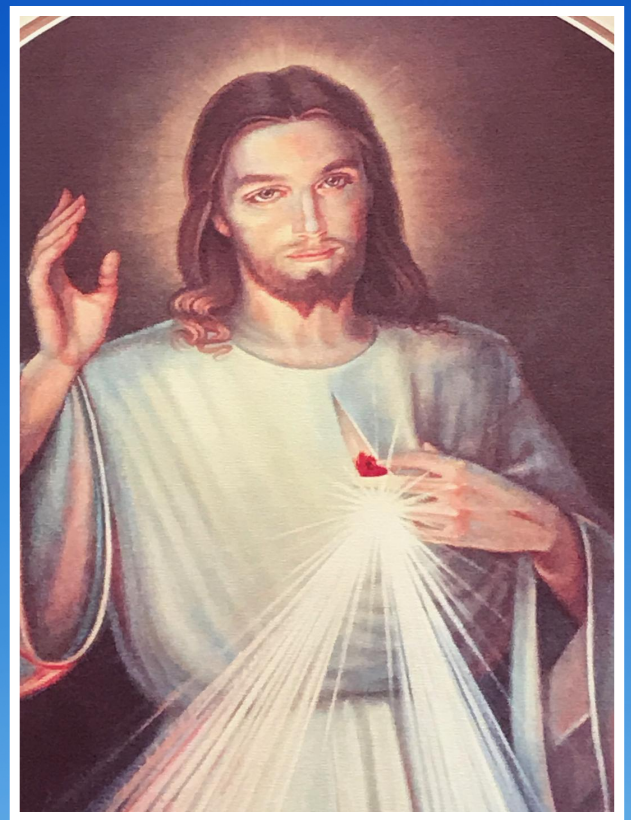
Suffering has a way of leading us to redemption. Someone who loves me taught me that. It just took a while for me to believe Him.

My life has been filled with many blessings, but for years I carried around a fear and distrust of men, including Jesus. I was sexually assaulted by a Catholic priest in 1981. It happened in a room full of people at a parish celebration when I was 12 years old. I carried the harmful effects imposed by this priest's actions for decades. The fear, anguish, shame, and sense of betrayal distorted my identity as a child of God and tainted my perspective of the world around me. I did not feel safe. I prayed regularly to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The following year, I celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation. After the bishop anointed me I returned to my pew, knelt down, and streams of tears ran down my face, tears that I was not producing. In that moment, I knew that God was real, and He was giving me a gift.

In my 30s I had a longing for something more. I returned to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and discovered I was struggling with forgiveness. I was invited to a healing conference where a couple asked if they could place their hands on me to pray. They invited the Holy Spirit to come upon me. At their command, I felt a stream of power move from the top of my head to the tips of my toes. My whole body began to tremble. Tears streamed down my face, and I began to perspire as if a fever was breaking. It was the healing power of the Holy Spirit.

Several years later, I still was facing some old wounds and feeling discouraged. I listened to a program called *Christ is the Answer* on Holy Family Radio. The topic that day was "Approaching God in Prayer." It recommended approaching God with praise and thanksgiving, then asking God a question and really **listening** for the answer.



On Friday, June 9, 2017, I went to my regular adoration hour with expectant faith and a confidence that God was going to speak to me. After a time of praise and thanksgiving, I asked Him to remove whatever might prevent me from truly listening. Suddenly and unexpectedly, I looked up and saw Jesus standing before me, in person. He was surrounded by light, and dressed in white robes. He gazed into my eyes with infinite love and mercy. Without saying a word, He made me feel completely seen, known and loved. His love penetrated through my entire being. He touched my deepest misery and lifted me out of an abyss.

His gaze then shifted to an almost playful invitation of friendship. He reached out and took my hand in His. He placed His other hand on my back, right behind my heart. My heart melted and I wept.

I left the chapel overflowing with His love and mercy and with the realization that Jesus is alive! He walks among us. He loves us more than we can imagine. He reaches His hand out and invites us to rise into new life with Him.

Jesus, I trust in you.

# SPOTLIGHT **On**

## Resurrection Choir

By Sue Jakubowski

IHM's Resurrection Choir began nearly twenty five years ago, organized by then Choir Director **Annie Schmieder**. This dedicated group of fifteen to twenty parishioners comprises the Resurrection Choir that provides beautiful music during the Celebration of Life Funeral Masses at our parish. Singing in the Resurrection Choir truly is a ministry of service and provides great support to families, says IHM Music Director **Jane Van Houten**, who leads the group.

Below, we spotlight four of the current members:



**Sam DeLuca** joined the Resurrection Choir in 2012 with no formal musical training but a strong desire to sing. He says he feels good about participating and finds joy in the service. His motto is, "If God gave you a good voice, let Him hear it. If he didn't give you a good voice, sing even louder to make him wish He had!" Lucky for us, Sam was given the gift of a beautiful voice and we are grateful that he shares it. He likes the Resurrection Choir because the songs are very familiar ones, and it doesn't require the effort of learning new music all the time. He also praises Jane's leadership for making the group a fun way to meet and get better acquainted with other parishioners.



**Irene English** is a charter member of the Resurrection Choir, and she feels blessed to have been able to participate for so many years. Although she cannot always attend at the present time, she feels a spiritual lift when she is able to offer to God and her congregation the gift of her song. She describes the commitment as very easy, and she has enjoyed the chance to make new friends while helping her parish family. Her favorite song to sing has always been *Amazing Grace*.



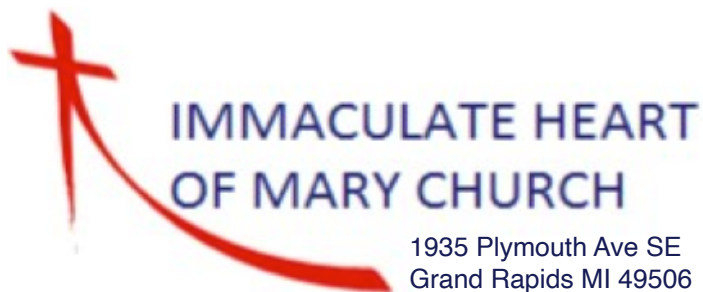
**John Jaksa** has sung in IHM's Chamber Choir for twenty-nine years and in its Resurrection Choir for seven. He is semi-retired and participates when he can. He highly recommends the ministry to anyone who is considering joining because it is spiritually and personally rewarding. For John, a special memory was singing at Deacon Ken Baldwin's funeral Mass. At that Celebration of Life service, the Resurrection Choir was joined by the IHM Chamber Choir, the St. Francis Choir, the Vietnamese Nuns Choir and singers from the Burmese community. It was spectacularly beautiful, says John!



**Donna McDonagh** is also a charter member of the Resurrection Choir, and for many years, she helped coordinate the notification of members when they were needed to sing. Through the use of a telephone call tree, the word goes out, and members come if their schedules allow. Donna says the music is often the same three or four favorite hymns and is usually well known by all or easy to learn. She loves singing for Jane Van Houten who has a knack for making all volunteers feel like they are good singers, says Donna.

*If you would like to consider joining the Resurrection Choir, please contact Jane Van Houten at 616-241-4477 or by email at [music@ihmparish.com](mailto:music@ihmparish.com). Jane describes the group as a wonderful, eclectic bunch of people who allow the Holy Spirit to lift their voices to loveliness. She stresses that there is no pressure in this ministry. It is purely serving Mass and not a performance, therefore, membership is open to all voices. Jane promises that new members will feel the joy in the Resurrection Mass and be humbled!*





# IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY CHURCH

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Lauren Murphy McLain

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*NOTE: All events are tentative, subject to cancellation or postponement.*

### MAY

26 Eighth Grade Graduation  
31 Blood Drive

### JUNE

6 Deacon Dominic's Ordination @ Cathedral  
7 Fr. Dominic's First Mass & Reception, 11:00  
26-28 Steubenville Youth Conference

### AUGUST

9 Blood Drive  
19 First Day of School

### SEPTEMBER

13 Parish Picnic

**IF YOU ENJOY READING THE HEARTBEAT,** *your help would be appreciated. We are in serious need of writers (ages 16 and up) as well as **story ideas**. For example, perhaps your group or project could use some advanced notice of an activity or is looking to increase its participation. For either, contact Deb Moore at [djbmoore@comcast.net](mailto:djbmoore@comcast.net).*



[ihmparish.com](http://ihmparish.com)



Did you know IHM has a Facebook page? Please "like us" on [Immaculate Heart of Mary - Grand Rapids](#) and follow all of our updates, postings and communications. We are just a click away!



Download the MyParish app at no cost to your IOS or mobile device by going to the App Store or iTunes. Keep in touch all week with IHM updates, news, events and more. It's a great faith-building resource.