



## Pastor Fr. Troy Nevins' Silver Jubilee

by Deb Moore, Terry Moore and Ann Williams

June 1 marks the 25th anniversary of Father Troy's ordination to the priesthood. The occasion will be celebrated with Mass and a reception here at IHM on May 30. In commemoration of this milestone, here is a short history of Fr. Troy's priestly journey thus far.

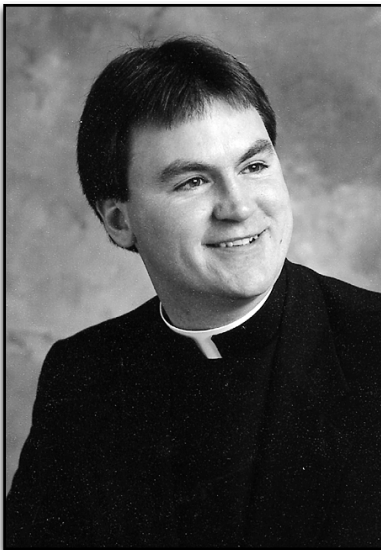
### Beginnings

Troy Nevins was born April 14, 1967, the oldest of the two sons born to George and Sandra Myers Nevins. He grew up on the northeast side of Grand Rapids, where he attended St. Jude Parish and the Forest Hills Public Schools. Troy first felt the call to the priesthood while participating in a high school youth group at St. James' Parish led by Deacon Ken Baldwin. He also took advantage of discernment weekends the diocese offered at St. Joseph's Seminary.

Troy's educational path led to Grand Rapids Junior College, Aquinas College and Franciscan University of Steubenville where he graduated with a degree in mental health in 1990. There he determined he was best suited for life as a diocesan priest.

When he returned to Grand Rapids after graduation, Bishop Robert Rose sent Troy to Mundelein Seminary in Chicago for his priestly preparation. As part of his training, Troy spent a year at St. Thomas Parish in Muskegon and summers at various parishes throughout the diocese. During his practical experience, he learned a lot and was inspired by different pastors who mentored him, especially Father Dennis Morrow, at two different parishes.

After six years of post-college study, Fr. Troy was ordained by Bishop Rose at the Cathedral of St. Andrew on June 1, 1996.



### First Assignments

Fr. Troy served as associate pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Portland, then as pastor at St. Joseph in Belding and St. Mary in Miriam, and pastor at Christ the King in Howard City and St. Francis deSales in Lakeview. He was in Rome on sabbatical when he received a call from then Bishop Walter Hurley. "He told me he had a new parish for me. It was so unexpected that I replied, 'Can I pray about it?'"

Bishop Hurley retorted, "Yes, but I have already prayed about it so I'm sure you'll come to same conclusion."

*The newly ordained Father Troy in 1996*

With that auspicious conversation began Fr. Troy's stint as the 13th pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary on June 30, 2007. "It was a very unsettling time, the start of the Great Recession," said Fr. Troy. "People were very anxious as they struggled financially. I remember the angst around the Catholic school system and the hurdles with finances and tuition assistance."

With time, Fr. Troy became comfortable and familiar with his new parish. "When I arrived at IHM, I knew people here had different needs than my previous assignments. Though different, they were alike in the most fundamental and human ways," said Fr. Troy. "Everyone has a cross to bear. Grasping that reality helped me become more gentle and open to people."

A few years later, Fr. Troy hired Deacon Ken who made an indelible mark on the parish. "He was a good and holy man and a jewel for our parish," said Fr. Troy. "It was an honor and privilege to work with him. I'm so proud of how our parish community responded to Ken, his disease and his passing." Fr. Troy's dear mentor, Fr. Den Morrow, has also passed away.

## Responsibilities

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As a pastor, Father Troy's days and weekends are full. In addition to saying Mass six days a week, hearing confessions weekly, celebrating weddings, funerals and baptisms, he oversees preparation for the sacraments of Marriage, First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. He is responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of Catholics at local retirement facilities. He conducts services at visitations, makes hospital calls and visits homebound parishioners and is responsible for developing the vision and mission for the parish.

Beyond the spiritual life of the parish is the business side. His job includes hiring parish/school staff, conducting staff reviews, overseeing a \$2.8 million budget and assuring the maintenance of the parish campus. Father Troy attends evening pastoral, finance council, board of education and Killgoar Foundation meetings and assures that parish policies and procedures, checks and balances, adhere to diocesan guidelines. He very much appreciates parishioners who serve on councils and boards as they help ease the load. His diocesan duties include being the Dean of the Grand Rapids South Deanery and chair of the Clergy Retirement Fund.

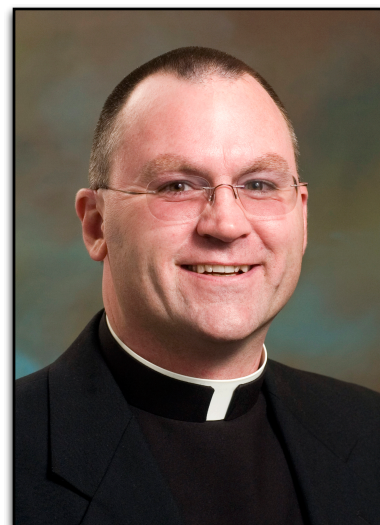
Leading a parish with a school increases a pastor's responsibilities enormously. However, Fr. Troy is committed to Catholic education and views our school as an essential means to help our children learn about and love God and His church. He supports our school wholeheartedly and spends as much time as possible with students. He wants to establish relationships, set an example and encourage "his kids" on their faith journeys.

## Time Away

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With so much to do, Father Troy relishes his time away to rest and recharge. When he leaves after 11:00 Sunday Mass, he may spend time with his family or go to the family cabin north of Grand Rapids. He also enjoys and finds inspiration in the pilgrimages he leads to the Holy Land, and hopes to resume them once the pandemic is over. After saying Mass at many of the places that were important in Jesus' life, he returns renewed in his faith.

Fr. Troy lets his hair down, so to speak, with good friends Father Mike Alber, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Portland, and Father Tony Russo, pastor of Our Lady of Consolation Parish in Rockford. Fr. Troy misses his dog Clare, his companion for so many years.



*Fr. Troy in 2006, just before he began as our pastor*

## Silver Jubilee

When asked of plans to celebrate his 25 years as a priest, Father Troy told of a special trip he had planned for this June. “When I was Pastor of St. Joseph in Belding and St. Mary in Miriam, I had a seminarian intern from Uganda named Emmanuel Tamale, now the Chancellor of the Diocese of Kiyinda-Mityana, Uganda. The trip was cancelled due to Covid, but I hope to visit Father Tamale and his family there in the future.”

Father Troy summed up the past quarter century: “Much like marriage, we all enter into our vocation with vague notions of what it entails. Reality is much different. Some of what I imagined has come to fruition, such as celebrating the sacraments, etc. Other aspects, such as administration, have grown tenfold since my ordination, and still others have completely blindsided me (scandals, etc.). I’m extremely grateful for my family, my priest friends and for the many lay friends who have included me in their families’ lives. The adventure has been great and I would do it all over again.”



*Celebrating his 20th anniversary as a priest in 2016*



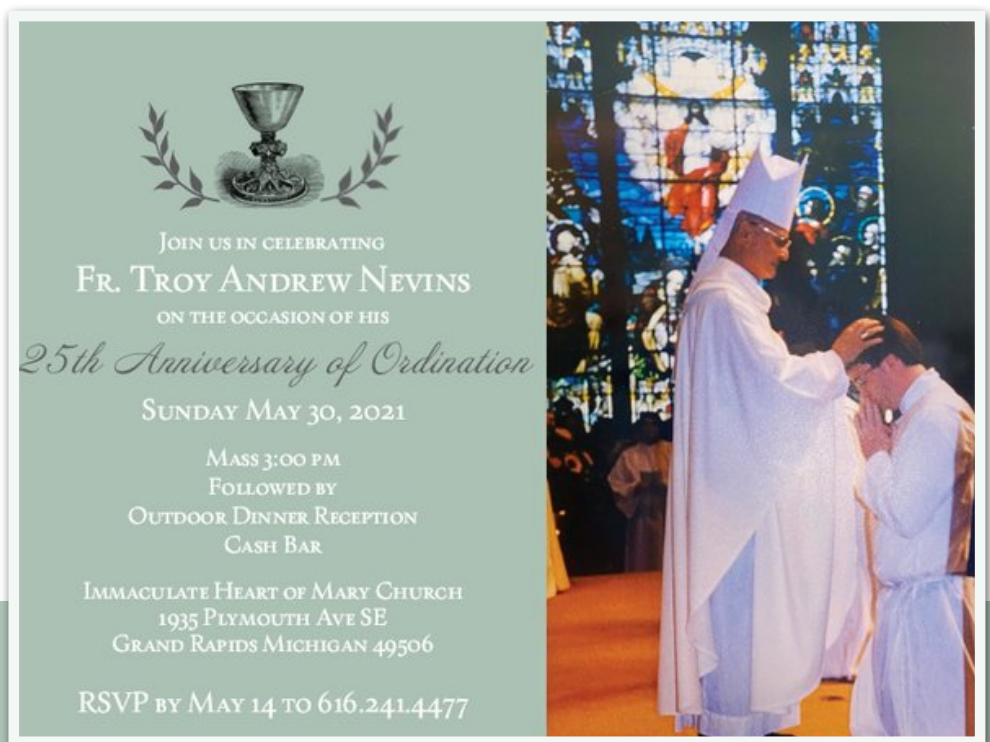
“The priestly vocation is a mystery. It is the mystery of a ‘wondrous exchange’ between God and man. A man offers his humanity to Christ so that Christ may use him as an instrument of salvation, making him as it were into another Christ. Unless we grasp the mystery of this ‘exchange,’ we will not understand how it can be that a young man, hearing the words ‘Follow Me!’ can give up everything for Christ, in the certainty that if he follows this path he will find complete personal fulfillment.”

—St. John Paul II  
*Gift and Mystery*



# PLEASE JOIN US!

This invitation was sent to all parishioners the first week in May via the U. S. Postal Service.

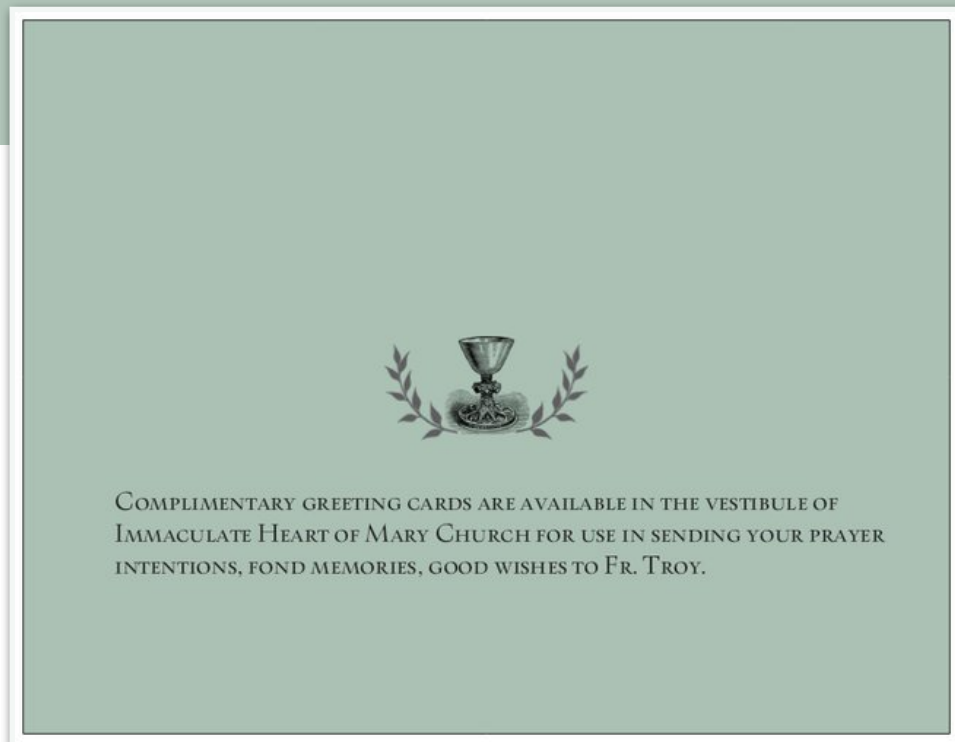


▼  
The 3:00 p.m. Anniversary Mass will be in the church.

Parishioners may attend the Mass even if they cannot stay for the Reception.

▼  
There will be NO 11:00 a.m. Mass that day, May 30.

Please RSVP so we have the proper amount of food.



▲  
The Reception will be an outdoor event under a huge tent in the church parking lot. BBQ Dinner will be catered by Saladino's. Cash bar.

# B E H I N D THE MICROPHONE

by Scott Barner



Since we so often identify IHM families with the Mass they attend and where they sit, allow me to introduce the Barners. We usually attend 8:30 Mass and Sandy and I sit in the middle on the aisle. Our girls, now grown, are the redheads Caitlin and Madison and we've been members since moving to Grand Rapids in 1996. For most of those years I've had a secret. No, I don't mean the other name I use as the host of now my third radio show in West Michigan. I mean the one I even kept from myself. You see, I'm an alcoholic.

Before the disease had full control, I asked about being a Lector. Sister Anita, then a fixture in the parish, was in charge and approached me after Mass one Sunday. Her direct, "Why aren't you Catholic?" in front of a lot of parishioners, still makes me laugh when I think of it. Though Sandy and the girls were Catholic, I was baptized in the Protestant church. Why indeed? Arrangements were made for me to jump into the RCIA group. I secured a sponsor, asked a lot of questions and was joyfully welcomed at the culmination of Lent. I began lecturing soon after.

I'm convinced that the Eucharist prepared my "temple" for the tough work ahead. My journey toward the bottom began with a childhood trauma that was left untreated. Saddled with what was eventually diagnosed as depression and generalized anxiety disorder, I was a time bomb once I began to medicate with alcohol. As is often the case, I needed more and more to get the desired effect.

About then it seemed like Father Troy was addressing me directly and increasingly preaching about dependence. Eventually I was drinking constantly when I wasn't at work or asleep. Serving two masters wasn't working. I could conceal my alcohol like the best of them, hiding it in the house and garage, going to four different liquor stores and paying alternatively with cash and credit, but I couldn't fool God.

It seems contrary to logic to thank God for blessing me with deadly liver disease, but it's what finally got my attention and saved my life. My doctor's options were to stop drinking or die. It is only then, on my knees in our regular pew, that I said the words to my Heavenly Father, "I am powerless against this disease, please help me!"

After coming clean with my amazingly supportive family, my next call was to Sandy's cousin, an Alcoholics Anonymous mentor. I began intense therapy with an incredible local psychologist. And, with the help of your prayers, I can now say I've been sober for more than seven years. My liver disease is reversed and I cannot put into words how transformational it is not to be controlled by addiction.

I recently read that addiction is a disease that sometimes gets confused with character. Understanding that you have a disease helps remove the shame that keeps you from seeking help. If any of this story sounds like you, let me condense the story...There is help, there is hope, it is never too late, and you are never alone. I implore you to admit your powerlessness and begin to heal. God bless you all.

# SPOTLIGHT FINANCE COUNCIL

by Sue Jakubowski

The six parishioners who serve on the IHM Finance Council provide vital assistance to Fr. Troy and our Business Administrator, Barb Heinbeck. Its principal responsibility is to steward IHM's resources—the money received through donations and offertory, the property the church owns, and the parish school, which is the Council's primary mission.



The Council is chaired by **Brian Pangle**, who has been a council member for approximately twelve years. As chair, Brian aims to facilitate good group discussion and effective information gathering, so as to offer sound advice to Fr. Troy on financial matters. The members of the Council work as a team, and each brings a unique and important skill set.

**Tom McGovern**, whose background is in construction, works closely with **John VanHouten**, an architect. Every spring, Tom, John, IHM Principal **Holly Lake**, **Fr. Troy** and **Barb Heinbeck** tour the property to identify problem areas, focus on capital improvements, and determine the needs of our plants and grounds. Tom and John work behind the scenes to make sure these projects are completed well during the summer.



**Lou Moran** is a “numbers guy” and has been part of the Council for fifteen years. His role is to review the monthly financial reports from the accountant. Line by line, Lou goes through the report, identifies anything that is not tracking on budget, and figures out why. At Council Board meetings, Lou then goes through his findings and discusses the variance, whether it is good or bad.

**Arnette Kraus** sees her role on the Council as making sure the group stays accountable to parishioners for their contributions, maintaining their trust that those funds will be well spent. The Covid-19 pandemic brought the unexpected blessing at IHM of prompting more parishioners to sign up for online giving, which greatly helps with budgeting.



**Steve Heidenreich** has been a member of the Council for three or four years and is often the one who coordinates the Catholic Services Appeal to our members. Steve has spoken at Mass about the mission and logistics of the appeal, and he works to set up the audio-visual program that accompanies the presentation. Every year, IHM is assessed an amount from the Diocese which is paid regardless of how much our congregation raises. Meeting the Diocesan benchmark is thus an important goal, and due to the generous giving of our members, that goal is often met.

Brian, Tom, John, Lou, Arnette and Steve all graciously give their time for our parish. We are so fortunate to have them at the helm. Each emphasized that IHM is a thriving parish because members generously give as they can and participate wholeheartedly. The parish is financially sound, and the Council wants to pass on the message that with everyone doing their part to share their time, talents and resources, IHM is well able to continue fulfilling its mission to be a Catholic community alive in faith, worship, and service to others!



# PARISHIONER PROFILE: BRETT & SARAH HUFFMAN FAMILY

by Terry Moore



When they first attended Mass at IHM in 2012, Sarah and Brett Huffman immediately felt a sense of community in the parish. Nine years later in the throes of a health crisis, they realized the depth and reach of that community.

Meeting at Michigan State University as students, Sarah and Brett were married in 2001 and lived in southeast Michigan. Growing up as a Presbyterian, Brett converted to Catholicism after their marriage.

"Catholicism brought me the richness and traditions of the Church as well as the Eucharist," said Brett. Born and raised a Catholic, Sarah's faith was renewed and strengthened by Brett's RICA process.

"He asked so many good questions that I never considered as I was growing up," said Sarah who works part-time at Catholic Central's Advancement Office. "Looking back, it was a meaningful time for us both."

When Brett accepted a new marketing position, the Huffman family moved to Grand Rapids. They settled on IHM because of the school and the parish. "It felt like a growing parish and one that was a good fit for us," said Sarah.

Both became active in the parish, Sarah with the Home & School Association where she would later serve as President, and Brett with the Knights of Columbus and other activities. "IHM is our home base, both spiritually and socially," said Sarah. Echoing that is Brett: "IHM is our family, where our friends are and our kids' friends are." Their four children are Nora, John, Maybn, and Theo.

The Huffman's faith practices beyond weekly Mass include making prayer a regular part of their lives. "It's not just prayer before meals and at bedtime," said Brett, "but it's also about service and giving back to people."

And recognizing the healing power of prayer and being a part of a faith community.

Earlier this year, Sarah was diagnosed with colon cancer. "When we first found out, we started praying extra hard," said Sarah. "I was able to put it in God's hand, realizing I couldn't do anything about it."

Sarah and Brett then told the news first to their children but with an added twist.

"I told them I had cancer but because we were part of an incredible faith community at IHM and CC, they were about to witness a beautiful faith in action that all of us had never seen before," said Sarah.

Making it public to their parish and school friends, the Huffmans were overwhelmed with the response. "Within 24 hours of the news, a meal train was set up that was full for two months," said Brett. A rosary was organized for the day before Sarah's surgery.

"When we pulled up to the IHM parking lot to attend the rosary, we were so moved to see it full and all the faces we knew and didn't know. It was so powerful," said Brett.

Fr. Troy also played a meaningful role. "He immediately reached out to us when he heard the news and asked to anoint me after Sunday Mass," recalled Sarah. "He has a big heart for caring for his parishioners."

Months after her successful surgery, Sarah is now undergoing chemotherapy while remaining upbeat about the future. "We have no reason not to believe I'll beat the cancer completely."

One can be sure prayer and a steadfast faith will remain a cornerstone for the Huffman family.

## NEWSLETTER STAFF

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MAY

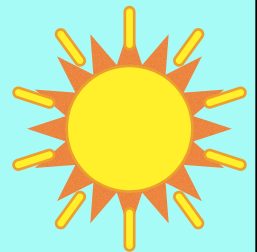
- 15 David Jameson's Ordination for Deacon (First Masses at IHM)
- 16 Mass in Honor of IHM high school grads, 11:00
- 19 High School Graduation Mass @ Catholic Central
- 30 Fr. Troy's 25th Anniversary Celebration, 3:00pm Mass  
(Note: No 11:00 am Mass that day)

### JUNE

- 1 8th Grade Graduation Mass, 6:30pm

### AUGUST

- 11-13 Vacation Bible School
- 25 First Day of School



**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)



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