

# FAITH for today



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Winter 2014

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## From the Facilitator

by Jennifer Ludtke

WDREF Facilitator

Just a short time ago (January 21), Pope Francis released a message for the 29th World Youth Day, which will take place in Krakow in 2016. As a way of accompanying us on our journey toward that occasion, for the next three years he will be offering messages reflecting on the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:1-12). This year he begins by reflecting on the first Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:3)

Here's a line from his message that caught my attention: "Do you really want to be happy?" Well, of course we want to be happy! But then he continues: "In an age when we are constantly being enticed by vain and empty illusions of happiness, we risk settling for less and "thinking small" when it comes to the meaning of life. Think big instead! Open your hearts!"

I have to say that nudged me a bit. How often have I been "thinking small" when instead I could have been opening my heart to something big...to Someone big!

I think one reason I find so much satisfaction with being part of WDREF is that it helps remind me that I'm involved with something big. It helps open my eyes and thus my heart to others who are also working toward the Kingdom. This work – this vocation of participating in God's work – truly brings meaning and joy to our lives. As we approach Lent, may opening our hearts to true happiness give us the courage to think big.

Pope Francis closes his message with this prayer: May Mary, Mother of the poor and Star of the new evangelization help us to live the Gospel, to embody the Beatitudes in our lives, and to have the courage always to be happy.

Amen to that!

*God bless you all - Jenny*

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## WDREF Calendar

**May 13-14, 2014**  
WDREF Board Meeting  
St. Anthony's Spirituality Center  
Marathon City

**May 19-22, 2014**  
NCCL Conference  
St. Louis, MO

**September 24, 2014**  
Conf. Grant Applications Due

**November 13-14, 2014**  
WDREF Conference  
Waupaca, WI

# 2013 WDREF Retreat Reflections

There is no question that DREs, YMs, and all Faith Formation people have busy schedules due to the simple fact we need to be very present to the folks and families we serve. In our efforts to be instruments of Christ's presence in the world it is sometimes all too easy to overlook how God is present to us. Some of the blessings of our work are the opportunities for regular Mass, Adoration, and prayer and faith sharing with co-workers and peers. If we truly believe in the promise of our baptism, that we have been anointed as "priest, prophet, and king," and that call has led us deeper into our vocation in faith formation and leadership, we must truly follow Jesus' example.

Recall from Scripture how often Jesus needs to break away from the crowd, to go off by himself or with a few of the disciples to pray and to be in the presence of his "Abba" in a unique way. If Jesus needed that time away, who do we think we are if we don't take some special time to also be in the presence of "our Abba?"

One of the great opportunities for me since coming to work in Beloit has been to attend the WDREF retreats. The site has been the Franciscan Retreat Center in Marathon, WI. There is a holiness at the site that can come from the very bricks in the building and views of the countryside. It's a good haul from the state line where we live but even that fact helps move one into "retreat mode" whether driving alone or with others.

This past fall Fr. James Kubicki, SJ led the group through an approach to Ignatian spirituality. Whether one was familiar with this method of examen and prayer or this was a new experience, Fr. Kubicki's peaceful, joyful, and practical approach made this way of prayer something I could continue back at work in the parish. He also gave us information, resources and insight into the "Apostleship of Prayer" that is his ministry. The schedule of the retreat, punctuated with Mass and prayer, also allowed rest and quiet reflection. We were reminded that St. Ignatius was a big believer in "holy naps."

Another aspect of the retreat is the camaraderie and bonding with others in our ministries. Sharing our stories; good, bad, blessings, worries, and dreams, has a special way of helping us understand and deepen the sacredness of our vocation. The hospitality of the staff, the meals, and the balance and rhythm of the days made me realize how valuable and important making even short retreats are for our soul.

Like most, I struggle with taking time away. A successful business leader once told me that taking time off, and empowering others to do your job for a bit was good for morale, your own and your team. Mystics and spiritual guides in every generation have spoke of the unique balance between action and contemplation every person needs to discover. One of the best things you can do for your ministry is budget your time and a few dollars for retreats. In every way the WDREF retreats are worth it! Take special time to be with "Our Abba."

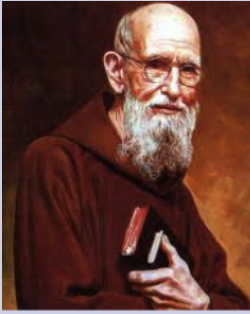
**Rob Olsen**

Director of Faith Formation, Our Lady of the Assumption Parish (Beloit, WI)



[View Flickr Photos](#)

# Father Solanus Casey, Patron Saint of WDREF



While committee members discuss the mission of WDREF and as we continue to ask God to guide this ministry, it became apparent that we also need to seek the intercessions of a patron saint.

After discerning various saints we decided on Father Solanus Casey, a Capuchin Priest, who was born on November 25, 1870 on a Wisconsin farm. He was the sixth child in his family of 6 girls and 10 boys and was named Bernard after his father. At the age of 21, Bernard was able to pursue his dream of becoming a priest. He entered St. Francis High School Seminary in Milwaukee. Five years later he was called by God to enter the Capuchin Order where he received his religious name of Solanus. He was ordained a priest on July 24, 1904.

Father Solanus was a simple priest who dedicated his life to the service of God's people; through his words and actions he continually showed his love of God by loving his people. He was a very zealous priest eager to spread the Catholic faith and always available to help the poor and sick. His passion for charity was especially noted during the Great Depression when his concern for the poor encouraged the Detroit Capuchins to establish the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, which continues to this day.

Father Solanus died in Detroit at the age of 86 on July 31, 1957. During his final illness, he remarked: "I'm offering my suffering that all might be one. If only I could see the conversion of the whole world." His last conscious act was to sit up in bed and exclaim, "I give my soul to Jesus Christ." He is buried at St. Bonaventure Monastery, Detroit, Michigan. Venerable Francis Solanus, pray for us.

*To learn more about Venerable Francis Solanus, go to <http://www.solanusc Casey.org/index.shtml>*

## SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS

Did you know that as a WDREF member you are eligible for regularly awarded scholarships and grants? We have deadlines coming up this spring and fall, which include:

### Annual Academic Scholarships

A total of \$1000 is awarded to applicants who:

- are actively engaged in the religious education ministry in the state of Wisconsin
- intend to remain in the religious education field for at least two more years
- are committed to their own professional development, i.e., working towards certification, continuing education units, or a bachelor's, master's or postgraduate degree in a field related to religious education ministry.

First consideration for academic scholarships will be given to applicants who have not been awarded a WDREF scholarship in the last two years.

The maximum amount to each awardee is \$500. This year's scholarship application deadline is March 15. To learn more, visit:

<http://www.wdref.org/ScholAwardsGrants.html>

### WDREF Conference Grants

A maximum of \$1000 in grant monies will be awarded for attending the biennial WDREF Conference.

Preference will be given to members who have not previously received a WDREF grant. (Members could receive grant money more than once, depending on number of applicants and funds available.)

The next Conference will be held this fall, Nov. 13-14 in Waupaca, and Grant applications are due Sept. 24. For more information, visit:

<http://www.wdref.org/ScholAwardsGrants.html>



## Mareda

This year has been a year of quiet transition for Mareda, due to staffing changes around our Diocese.

*October 2013:* We sponsored a workshop for our Membership facilitated by Dr. Kathy Beuscher on the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

*December 2013:* We collaborated with Pastoral Associates of the Archdiocese (PAMA) and Archdiocesan Liturgical Ministers Association (ALMA) in having Fr. Jan Michael Joncas present a Co-Workers in the Vineyard Breakfast at Cardinal Stritch University. His topic was Hospitality in the Bible, and his personal experience with suffering, and how it has influenced his compositions.

*February 2014:* Along with PAMA, we hosted an Open Forum with Archbishop Jerome ListECKI for all Pastoral Ministers on the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Our Final event for the 2013-14 Catechetical year will be a workshop on the Theology of the Body facilitated by Sr. Kieran Sawyer.

## MDREO

### MDREO Program Days this year have included:

*September:* Diocesan Convocation: “Caritae el Veritate: Charity in Truth” with a discussion on the complex and sensitive topic of same-sex attraction.

*November:* “Catechetical Leadership for the 21st Century” presented by Dr. Joe Bound, from the Diocese of Green Bay

*December:* “The Church & New Media” and White Elephant Exchange

*January:* “Wounds of Our Society: How to Address Current Cultural Issues,” presented by Vicki Thorn

### MDREO will be sponsoring:

*February:* “Cradle Catholics Best practices for PreK - age 6”

*March:* “Evangelization” with speaker Peter Andrestek addressing Evangelical small group process

*April:* “Full Time Christianity: Creating a Culture of Intentional Discipleship in your Parish” presented by Julianne Stantz, Diocese of Green Bay

*May:* a water-related activity.

## ProCLAYM

ProCLAYM began the year in September with a board retreat held at St. John’s Homeless Shelter in Green Bay. We all volunteered our services in cleaning, sorting, organizing, moving furniture, etc., to help ready the shelter for occupancy. The morning was followed by lunch and a formal meeting.

Our Kick-Off Day in September was a huge success. Dr. John Craghan from St. Norbert College was our speaker on Living the Scripture. His talk was followed by a lineup of Best Practices in Faith Formation.

We have re-figured our diocesan districts from five to three. Rather than districts being identified by numbers, we are now referred to as the North, East and West Districts.

The Diocesan Convocation on Evangelization took place in November

with Keynoter Cardinal Werl. ProCLAYM was present as an exhibitor with a table manned by our board members promoting membership and our presence in the diocese.

At the request of Bishop Ricken some of our members are presently on a committee to preview several High School textbook series. After previewing all the series the committee will rate them in order of preference and present their top recommendations to Bishop Ricken. Bishop Ricken will have final determination as to which five series will be approved for use in the GB Diocese for High School Faith Formation in both Catholic Schools and RE programs.

The Diocesan Education Dept. with help from ProCLAYM will be presenting a catechetical day in April for all catechists in the Diocese to meet with reps from the five approved textbook series companies. The day will include a keynote speaker and breakouts with each of the companies.



## Conference Details

On November 13-14, 2014 WDREF will host its Biennial WDREF Conference at the Waupaca Ale House in Waupaca, WI.

The registration fee is \$150 for WDREF members and \$180 for non-members. Registration information is available at [www.wdref.org/Events.html](http://www.wdref.org/Events.html) or from your local representative.

We are excited to welcome Mr. Matt Weber as our keynote presenter. Matt is a producer for Catholic TV and he hosts a weekly segment called "A Word With Weber," which airs internationally to over 10 million viewers. He is a frequent contributor to the Huffington Post and has authored the book "Fearing the Stigmata." **Check Matt out on YouTube.**

Our theme for the conference is "We Are A People Of Faith." Our conference will focus on building up a strong community of believers based on the lived faith of the saints of the past and the saints of today. As a conference attendee you will be inspired to bring your faith alive with both holiness and humor. Please plan today to join us November 13-14, 2014.

Accommodations for the conference can be made at the Best Western Foxfire in Waupaca. A block of rooms is being held under the name "WDREF" with rates starting at \$85. To reserve your rooms call (715) 942-0500.



For more information or general questions about the conference please contact Pam Fischer at (920) 726-4228.

\*Note: if you plan to arrive on Wednesday evening ProCLAYM, from the diocese of Green Bay, is planning an informal reception for all conference attendees at the hotel. You are invited to join them for "Wine, Cheese, and Chocolate."

## B&R Blessings & Recognition

Congratulations to Kathy Lesniak who was named DRE of the Year by the Diocese of La Crosse on August 9, 2013.



Kathy's dedication to quality catechesis has been evident to those with whom she has worked. She has given tirelessly to the church at the parish, diocesan and state levels promoting integrity and professionalism within the ministry and discipleship within the lives of many. Thank you Kathy for your dedication to ministry!



**Present at the awards ceremony from DARE (left to right):** Mary Hart, Mike Lambracht, John Schmitt, Kathy Lesniak (DRE of the Year), Barb Ceranski, Lee Ann Lella

## St. Anthony Spirituality Center Under New Leadership

### St. Anthony's of Marathon, Inc. hires Fr. Frank Corradi and Barbara Ceranski as Interim Co-Directors to lead St. Anthony Spirituality Center.

JANUARY 29, 2014 – Marathon, Wis. – The Board of Directors of St. Anthony's of Marathon, Inc. announced Wednesday, January 29 that they have named Fr. Frank Corradi, spiritual leader, and former board member Barbara Ceranski as interim co-directors of St. Anthony Spirituality Center (SASC) in Marathon.

Corradi, a senior priest of the Diocese of La Crosse, and a member of the Secular Franciscan Order, holds a BS in Education and History from Spring Hill College; MS in Secondary Education from Iona College; MA in Theology from the University of Notre Dame. His wealth of knowledge and experience will bring a great gift to the Center.

Fr. Frank will share director duties with Ceranski until a permanent director is hired at a later date. Both the Board and SASC staff feel that interim co-directors will be best through the transition as the Center undergoes structural updates and improvements.

Corradi said, "My desire to be of continued service to the Church could not be better spent than helping the stakeholders and guests to experience the unconditional love of God. My membership in the Secular Franciscan Order will help me to deepen my own recognition of God's love at the heart of my relationships. I strive to create an environment that will express this love in the care and respect that is shown to the colleagues who work at the Center and all those who seek spiritual growth here. I look forward to working with my competent and dynamic co-director, whom I have known for many years and whose faith in the love of God and service to the Church has been outstanding."

"Barb has graciously accepted this position in collaboration with our current Spiritual Leader Fr. Frank Corradi," said Joseph Breman, president of the Board. "After interviewing and reviewing many potential candidates, the Board is confident that Barb and Fr. Frank are most qualified, experienced, flexible individuals for this position at the present time."



Ceranski has an extensive background in parish ministry as a director of faith formation and adult faith formation and evangelization. She holds a degree in Religious Studies and Organizational Management from Viterbo University and certificates in Pastoral Ministry, Servant Leadership and Leadership Excellence G2. Recently retired from full-time parish ministry, Ceranski has a long history with SASC as a retreatant, volunteer, and, until accepting the position, vice president of the Board of Directors.

Enthusiastic about the future, Ceranski explained, "The many people who care for this ministry are unbelievable; the Holy Spirit is truly at work here as we continue to build on this foundation and Franciscan Values. I look forward to sharing this leadership role with Fr. Frank who offers a deep passion to serve God's people. We are blessed."

SASC recently changed ownership after the Capuchins who ran the Center for 95 years passed on the reins to St. Anthony's of Marathon, Inc., a non-profit corporation formed by an interested group of volunteers who wanted to see SASC carry on as a retreat center in Central Wisconsin.

To learn more about St. Anthony's visit:  
[www.sarcenter.com](http://www.sarcenter.com).

# Who's Who Moment ...

*WDREF Member in the Spotlight*

*Gary Pokorny*

*Director of Catechesis and Youth Ministry*

*Archdiocese of Milwaukee*

Gary Pokorny loves our faith tradition and loves learning. And that's what keeps him inspired in his ministry as Director of Catechesis and Youth Ministry for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, a post he has held since 2007.

Gary grew up in Milwaukee where his family belonged to St. Aloysius Parish in West Allis. He attended St. Al's grade school, Pius XI High School and St. Francis De Sales College. He went on to earn his MDiv from St. Francis School of Pastoral Ministry. This prepared him for parish ministry at Holy Cross Parish in Milwaukee where he served first as Youth Minister, and then as Director of Religious Education. In 1994 Gary was appointed Director of Lay Formation at St. Francis Seminary where he served until moving into his current ministry.

Among the many aspects of his ministry, Gary finds rewarding signs of hope in the ongoing commitment of parents, parish catechetical leaders and catechists. Additionally, he is inspired by the energy and enthusiasm of new leaders entering the field, whom he works with through the New Directors Institute offered by the Archdiocese, and in the leadership of Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome Listecki. "Archbishop Listecki's steady leadership through tough times for the Archdiocese and his consistent emphasis on the three priorities of Catholic identity, evangelization, and stewardship have been a great support" he said in our interview. He's excited about the developments in catechesis for adolescents, a "population that is calling us to think hard about how we minister to them, and moving us to try new things to address their decreasing numbers in our programs."

Addressing the totality of our ministry, not just teaching the children about our faith, through what he refers to as "a comprehensive vision of family and parish life" is another area that challenges Gary. "It's no longer just providing youth activities" he reflected. Being a husband and father of three, two daughters and a son, gives him first-hand experience in these segments of the Catholic population.

Forming the Catechetical Spirit program, Catholic Scouting, and the archdiocesan Technology in Catechesis Committee are other areas that Gary see bearing fruit.

Forming the Catechetical Spirit is a catechist formation series developed by Sandi Schmitt, a parish catechetical leader in the Archdiocese, which has now been implemented in at least eight locations. Gary likes the fact that it "involves PCLs themselves in forming their catechists, allowing them to rediscover the gifts of knowledge and experience, which they can pass on to the catechists without having to turn to outside presenters and programs." Additionally, the enthusiasm and dedication of the catechists once they are opened up to "how much there is to explore in the Catholic tradition, and the desire to learn more" are also benefits of the program according to Gary. The religious emblems of Catholic Scouting lead scouts and their families to "learn about and express their faith through Scouting" Gary said. About 600 Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts each year earn one of the Catholic medals. The "Gigs, Geeks and God" conference organized by the Technology Committee continues to inspire me, too."

Gary finds challenges facing the field to include the culture in which our families live, finding and nurturing well-prepared directors, coordinators and catechists, multiple parish ministry and the turnover of parish leadership at all levels.

In light of the blessings and challenges of his ministry Gary says he "asks each day "to be faithful, productive and effective, and more open to the Mystery of Faith."

By Pam Fischer, NCCL Rep.  
[faith1@lakefield.net](mailto:faith1@lakefield.net)

## November 2013 Rep. Council Meeting Highlights:

- Discussion was held on the current mission statement.
- The Leadership Discernment Committee (LDC) led a process to call forth names for at-large board members. A discussion was also held to surface names for the presidential nominees.
- The NCCL website was discussed along with other websites that we currently use, what is great about them and what needs improvement was the main focus of the dialogue. The information that was surfaced will be turned over to the board as well as the technology committee.
- NCCL committees gave short reports:
  - Evangelization website has some great things on it.
  - Adult Faith Formation: providing facilitators for keynote discussions during the Annual Conference
  - Conference 2014 will be held in St. Louis, MO from May 18-22. Check out [www.nccl.org](http://www.nccl.org) for more details.
  - Product Development has been talking to Loyola Press about redoing the Effective DRE series.
- National Certification: March 1 and October 1 are deadline dates for applying. It is a one-year process and you are certified for seven years. More information at [www.lencertification.org](http://www.lencertification.org). Registration fee: \$95 and Certification Fee: \$165 (The standards for this certification are based on Co-Workers in the Vineyard.)

## WDREF Executive Team



**Treasurer - Danelle Kegley**  
**Facilitator - Jennifer Ludtke**  
**Secretary - Dominick Meyer**

Learn more about our executives...  
[www.wdref.org/OurOrganization.html](http://www.wdref.org/OurOrganization.html)

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## WDREF Mission Statement

As the statewide organization of professional catechetical leaders, the Wisconsin Directors of Religious Education Federation (WDREF) promotes ministerial and professional development and provides ongoing formation, advocacy, support and recognition to our members through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.