



# The Worker

SAINT JOSEPH THE WORKMAN*Cathedral*

## Members of New Women's Group Are Developing Friendships Rooted in Christ

Members of a new Women's Group that meets at the Cathedral have been listening to and discussing a podcast series in an effort to build up the local community of women, while striving to grow in holiness.

"The Women's Group held its first meeting on March 20," said its organizer, Elizabeth Decker of the Cathedral parish. Participants have been listening to the *Abiding Together* podcast series by Sister Miriam James Heidland of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity and two of her friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger. They are specifically going through a 16-episode series on the four main identities of woman: Daughter, Sister, Mother and Bride.

"Each identity has four episodes with it," Decker said. "Therefore, the first session was all about the identity of Daughter. We met four different times to talk about this identity. The second session was the same podcast and four episodes, but we went over the identity of Sister. The third session is from September 18 to October 30 and we are going over the identity of Mother."

"The fourth session will be again on the same podcast, but we will go over the identity of Bride," Decker said. That session will begin on November 13 and probably will finish in January. Participants listen to the podcast on their own and come together for discussion at the group's meetings.

Each session's meetings are from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. every other Monday at the Cathedral. There is time to mingle, followed by prayer, an icebreaker question and splitting into small groups for discussion.

"After we are finished with the podcast series, I would like to keep meeting, but we may switch up the format," Decker said. "I have not decided what we will do next, but I am thinking maybe some kind of Bible study focusing on the women of the Bible. There are also some other great studies through this same podcast. We will discuss as a group as it gets closer."

The Women's Group is for women of all ages after college, and the participants so far have a wide range of ages, Decker said. "It is such a blessing to be able



**Organizer Elizabeth Decker speaks to members of the new Women's Group at an August 21 social event at the Cathedral**

to learn from each other and women from all walks of life," she said. "It is a Catholic group of women not only from the Cathedral but the La Crosse-area Catholic churches."

"My goal with this Women's Group is to build up our community of women at Cathedral parish and throughout La Crosse so we can grow to know, love and serve God better, get to know more about ourselves, and grow as sisters in Christ," Decker said. "It has been so beautiful to see this community build and grow. What an amazing group of women! We have really grown to know each other and to be vulnerable with each other and are creating deep friendships rooted in Christ. We offer up each other in prayer and help encourage each other in whatever ways are needed."

For more information about the podcast series, visit [www.abidingtogetherpodcast.com](http://www.abidingtogetherpodcast.com). For more information about the Women's Group, email Elizabeth Decker at [elizabeth.shewmon@gmail.com](mailto:elizabeth.shewmon@gmail.com). ✕

## Epiphany Rectory Open House Will Be Held January 6

Monsignor Gilles will host an Epiphany Rectory Open House (for adult parishioners) on Saturday, January 6, after the 4:30 p.m. Mass. Come and enjoy the company of fellow parishioners. Hors d'oeuvres and libations will be served. ✕







## “Coffee With Kevin” Podcast Tells Listeners About Cathedral Initiatives

People anywhere in the world can now learn more about the Catholic faith and things the Cathedral is doing on the new “Coffee With Kevin” podcast series featuring Kevin Decker, parish mission associate at the Cathedral.

The monthly podcasts began this past spring. The first one to be published featured Decker and the Cathedral’s Rector, Monsignor Richard Gilles, talking about evangelization in the Catholic Church and the Cathedral’s evangelization efforts. The second one featured Decker and Monsignor Gilles discussing fatherhood in the family and in the Church. And the third one showed Decker and Natalie Elskamp talking about the parish’s *Restore the Roots: Cultivating Your Domestic Church* liturgical living initiative, which Elskamp coordinates.

The podcasts can be seen and/or heard on places like YouTube, Spotify and the Diocese of La Crosse website. A podcast is a broadcast that is placed on the Internet for anyone who wants to listen to it or watch it. “Podcasts are an easy way to be accessible to more people,” Decker said. “People are always wanting information. The main thing is to evangelize, but also to educate and get out to people in the community, the great things that the Cathedral is doing,” he said. Decker will typically talk to someone on the podcast, adding, “It’s nice to have someone to bounce things off of.

“The podcasts are informational,” Decker said. “I definitely don’t like to have things get dry and boring. I like to have things upbeat and have people get something out of it.”

The podcasts are recorded with the help of Zach Tudahl and Erik Archer. Decker plans to typically record a podcast on the third Friday of each month. So they would be available to listeners and viewers at the beginning of the following month. ✕



From left, Kevin Decker and Monsignor Richard Gilles speak during one of the “Coffee With Kevin” podcasts that can be seen and/or heard on places like YouTube, Spotify and the Diocese of La Crosse website.

# Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

for Catechumens, Candidates, Parishioners and Sponsors

## The Current Season of RCIA Sessions Has Begun

The current season of RCIA sessions at the Cathedral parish began in September, according to Deacon Joe Richards, coordinator of the parish’s RCIA program.

“On Tuesday, September 19, our expectations have been exceeded,” he said. “Some 16 individuals have come forth to discover what the Catholic Church is about. Most of these are already hopeful of coming into full communion with the Church. “Add to all of these five more – who are already Catholic but are committing to come along for the ride, in order to work on a current understanding about their faith. Everyone makes the commitment to be here until Pentecost Sunday, every Tuesday from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m., barring any unforeseen circumstances. (Altogether this lasts about 30 sessions.) This is because we create a community event and everybody is in it FOR each other.

“Consider the anecdote about our last season which, already having been completed for a couple months, all participants took it on themselves to gather for an evening and dinner just to celebrate WITH each other,” Richards said. “Not a soul was absent. The suggestion remains that in a couple months we do this again – in order to share what now as new Catholics our journey will have become. So yes, this aspect is huge. But it requires a commitment. Know that it is never too early or late to investigate the process of RCIA. The Holy Spirit takes no time off in calling forth those who will come.”

RCIA is a process of initiation into the Catholic Church for those who are experiencing a conversion in their lives and desire to be baptized; those who from other Christian traditions seek full communion in the Catholic Church through Eucharist and Confirmation; or for those Catholics who have not received religious education, Confirmation or First Eucharist. This process enables one to come more fully into a relationship with Jesus Christ. To do this, participants study the Gospels, learn Catholic doctrine and moral teaching, develop and deepen a life of prayer, and live the faith in action. It is not merely a course of instruction but a process of conversion designed to meet the unique and individual needs of the participants.

For more information, contact the parish office at **608-782-0322**, or Monsignor Richard Gilles or Deacon Joe Richards. ✕

### Evangelization Opportunity

**What can Cathedral parishioners do?**

- If you know someone who is thinking about joining the Church, encourage them to take part in the RCIA process. Sometimes all one needs is to be asked.
- Offer to become a sponsor for a Candidate.
- Pray for the success of the RCIA process here at St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral and for the intentions of the participants.

### SPONSORS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED!

**Who are the Sponsors?**

Sponsors are fully initiated members of the Catholic community who make the journey with individuals in the RCIA process. They are a source of valuable information, examples of Christian disciples, and friends introducing the Catechumens and Candidates to the ways of the Church and our parish family. They share their faith, answer questions and attend sessions with the RCIA participants. Call the parish office regarding inquiry sessions.



## Meredith is a Believer in Cathedral Parish’s RCIA Program

The Cathedral parish’s RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) program is “life-changing,” says Patrick Meredith, who this past spring completed the program that began last fall. Meredith and his wife, Anna, went through the past year’s RCIA program (which began last September and concluded in May) together, and both received the sacrament of Confirmation at the Easter Vigil Mass on April 8 at the Cathedral. Their daughter, Amelia, was baptized at the Easter Vigil Mass.

“It was life-changing,” Meredith said of the RCIA program. “I really got a lot out of it. I knew that it was what I needed to do to become Catholic. But I didn’t know just how much information I would get, and how connected I would feel from doing it.”

Meredith had been baptized as a Lutheran. “I think we were still going to the Lutheran Church when I was about 5 and my parents separated,” he said. “And there was no more church at that point. “Having completely fallen away from Christianity as a young child, I really had no structure or kind of balance in my life,” Meredith said. “When Christianity started to resonate with me, what really drew me in fully was that I knew my daughter was on the way. And I wanted her to have a childhood that was better structured” than his had been. Amelia was born in September 2022.

Meredith and Anna began regularly attending Mass at the Cathedral in the summer of 2022. “And it really resonated with me,” he said, “in a way that no other church that I’ve been to ever had.” He chose to become Catholic partly because of “The history of the Church, being the first church and 2,000 years old, it seemed like the obvious choice.”

Meredith said he has been in recovery from an addiction for the past three years. “I was already in recovery when I started RCIA” he said. “I think getting the foundations of the Catholic faith made my recovery that much stronger.” Meredith said he was impressed by what he learned in the RCIA program from its coordinator, Deacon Joseph Richards, and Monsignor Richard Gilles.

“To be honest, I had expected RCIA to be an exercise in me suspending disbelief or otherwise ignoring logical inconsistencies in order to achieve a relationship with God,” he said. “What I found instead was:

- A) two incredibly passionate, knowledgeable and thoughtful teachers with nothing but patience and goodwill to offer myself and the other candidates and
- B) a beautiful theology that has left no stone unturned over thousands of years.

“It’s a beautiful church,” Meredith said of the Cathedral. “I’ve really gotten along well with everyone that I’ve met here. It seems like a great group of people. And Monsignor Gilles and Deacon Joe and Deacon (Tom) Skemp are just great to talk to.” ✕



Patrick Meredith says the Cathedral Parish’s RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) was a “life-changing” experience for him.

## Walking With Women Praying With Scripture Expands in Second Year

After a successful first year at the Cathedral, a *Walking With Women Praying With Scripture* initiative is expanding with an invitation to all women to participate. The first gathering of the second year was on September 7. Participating women will meet for about 90 minutes every other Thursday through May at the Cathedral, said organizers Mari Erickson and Amy Mulhern. Erickson is a member of the Parish Pastoral Council and Chair of the Family Life Committee. Mulhern is a facilitator of various initiatives in the Diocese of La Crosse.

There’s still time for any interested women to join the group, and they don’t have to attend every meeting because “Each session stands on its own,” Mulhern said. Cost is \$15 per person for materials – mainly the *Life of Christ Lectio Divina Journal* book published by the Dominican Sisters of Mary.



Mari Erickson



Amy Mulhern

“First of all, we have social time” at the meetings, Mulhern said. “We meet and greet.” That is followed by Scripture readings from the journal and discussion. “The foundation of every gathering is prayer,” Erickson said. “We pray with Scripture as a small-group exercise and share with one another answers to some of the questions in our book. They have wonderful videos and artwork that accompany each reading.”

An average of about 20 women attended the meetings held in the initiative’s first year, which ran from last fall to May. “In the fall of last year, we offered personal invitations to many women in the La Crosse area to come and experience praying with Scripture together as a group,” Mulhern said. “We modeled our group by the example given by Chiara Lubich during World War II. She gathered faithful women together in community to pray with the Gospel readings. The community and prayer inspired a deeper relationship with God for these women. This community fostered their going out to spread the love of Christ in the midst of great despair. “We are living in a time of great heartache in our country,” Mulhern said. “We as Christian women are the heart of the family and the Church. As we journey together into the Living Word, God can transform us into greater disciples of His love.”

When the initiative began a year ago, all of the participants were Catholics. Halfway into the first year, Erickson said, “The women went out like the first apostles and invited others to ‘come and see.’ We were blessed to have women of faith from other Christian denominations also join us” when that happened. “We want other Christians to feel comfortable coming to these.” We are inviting all area women to participate in the second year. Upcoming meetings will be listed in the *Calendar Reminders & Business* section of the parish’s weekend bulletins. For more information, email [walking9praying8@gmail.com](mailto:walking9praying8@gmail.com) or text or call **608-518-7655**. ✕

## Beacon of Light Parish Picnic is a Big Success



The Cathedral parish’s second annual Beacon of Light picnic was a big success. The celebration after the 10:00 a.m. Mass on Sunday, September 10, drew a large crowd and featured such things as a pig roast, lots of other food, raffle baskets, games, music, cake auction and an ice cream truck.

The purpose of the event is “To build community,” Monsignor Richard Gilles said as parishioners dined at tables in the Cathedral parking lot. “And for people that go to the various different Masses to meet somebody new. In my homily (that day), I challenged them to meet somebody

new and make a new friend, to celebrate parish life. I was very pleased when I came out today and saw so many parishioners attending the picnic,” Monsignor Gilles said.

Proceeds from the event will be used to support youth ministry, outreach and marriage enrichment activities. ✕







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