

Save the date



June 24

Let's go to Bat for Kids!

Join Catholic Charities West Michigan for the 23rd annual Let's Go to Bat for Kids! June 24 at Fifth Third Ballpark. Watch local media personalities and clergy from the diocese take the field in a light-hearted softball game to benefit a serious cause: CCWM's child abuse prevention services and family preservation programs. Free children's games and activities will be available on the concourse during the game. Tickets: \$5 for age 13 and up; children 12 and under admitted free. Gates open at 5:45 p.m.; opening ceremonies at 6:30 p.m. Call **616.551.5667** for more information. For event updates and ticket purchase information, visit ccwestmi.org.

July 9-11

Shine on faith

St. Patrick Church in Grand Haven will host its annual Shine Youth Conference July 9-11 for high-school-age teenagers seeking to celebrate and deepen their faith. The cost for the conference is \$50, which includes meals and lodging. To register or for additional information, e-mail Chris Kreslins at ckreslins@shineyouthconference.com or go to shineyouthconference.com.



July 24

Rally for Hope and Hunger

The 11th annual Rally for Hope and Hunger! will take place Saturday July 24 during the Ionia Free Fair. For a \$20 ticket, guests participate in a 50-mile motorcycle ride that includes breakfast and a souvenir patch. The event helps support programs of Catholic Charities West Michigan (CCWM) including God's Kitchen and child welfare and family service programs. For more information, visit rallyforhopeandhunger.org.



My Spiritual Home

>> **Msgr. Gaspar F. Ancona** is a senior priest of the Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids.

In the "old days," belonging to a particular Catholic parish was more a question of where you lived than anything else. If you lived in a given neighborhood, then it was expected that you belonged to the parish of that area. An exception was made for people of different ethnic origins who may have belonged to parishes that met their language and cultural needs. Otherwise, you belonged to the parish of your area.

These days, the parish you claim as your own is more a matter of choice and less dependent on where you live. People decide on membership according to their individual needs and desires. If they are seeking a good religious education for their children, they may inquire into a school or program of the parish. Otherwise, people often are looking for a parish with a good community spirit, with liturgies that seem well prepared and even inspiring, and with a priest who is welcoming and gives good homilies.

These basic qualities are not too much to expect. After all, the world in which we live is a demanding and challenging place. Our faith takes a pounding from a barrage of natural or human-made woes on any given day, and even more so from the sins and failures of ourselves within the church.

The Catholic parish, therefore, needs to be, more than ever, an energizing place where people's hearts are strengthened and their faith in Jesus deepened. Here is where we can join in a community of Christ's people to encounter him in his word and especially in the Eucharist and the other sacramental signs of his presence. The parish is where we can learn from one another, celebrate with each other the milestones of life, grieve with the support of one another, and hope together in the Resurrection.

A follower of Christ can't expect to remain faithful and strong without being part of the greater family of the Lord. The community of believers all need each other in prayer, in friendship, and in mutual support, if we expect to make our passing through this world to be fruitful.