



They make season bright for others

Floyd and Jean Wouters, aka Santa and Mrs. Claus, share smiles, faith

BY JAYE ALDERSON | FOR THE COMPASS

REDGRANITE — Floyd Wouters, 70, and Jean Wouters, 65, members of St. Mary Parish in Winneconne, truly know how to keep Christmas in their hearts all year. They have been playing Santa and Mrs. Claus for more than 20 years for venues such as their parish, Mercy Medical Center and Father Carr's Place 2B in Oshkosh and St. Vincent de Paul in Appleton.

It all started 24 years ago in true Santa fashion. Floyd was then working at St. John Neumann Middle School in Oshkosh. He had a snowy beard and loving nature and attracted the attention of Melanie, the 3-year-old daughter of a woman who worked in the lunch line. Melanie was convinced from September on that Floyd was Santa Claus. Just before Thanksgiving vacation, she wanted to sit on his knee and confide her Christmas wishes.

Floyd wanted to do something special for Melanie. He received permission to throw her a little party at the school the day before Christmas vacation. All



BRAD BIRKHOLZ | FOR THE COMPASS

Floyd and Jean Wouters, members of St. Mary Parish in Winneconne, have played the role of Santa and Mrs. Claus for more than 20 years.

the middle school students cooperated in making it a special day for the young girl.

The word got around quickly and Floyd was asked to play Santa by others. Even after his family moved to Winneconne and Floyd moved on to teach mathematics at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, his appearances continued.

His wife, Jean, quickly became part of the team as Mrs. Claus. "I'm shy and I don't like doing it by myself," Floyd said. "I needed her support. Jean became just as hooked on that whole business as I was."

Our full story appears in the Dec. 23 issue.

FRANKLY, FRANCIS



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we shall begin a new series of catechesis, on the theme of Christian hope. It is very important, because hope never disappoints. Optimism disappoints, but hope does not! We have such need, in these times which appear dark, in which we sometimes feel disoriented at the evil and violence which surrounds us, at the distress of so many of our brothers and sisters. We need hope! We feel disoriented and even rather discouraged, because we are powerless and it seems this darkness will never end. We must not let hope abandon us, because God, with his love, walks with us. "I hope, because God is beside me." We can all say this. Each one of us can say: "I hope, I have hope, because God walks with me."

+ Pope Francis, Dec. 7, 2016

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Little Chute parish directs village initiative that will feed thousands

BY JEAN PEERENBOOM | FOR THE COMPASS

LITTLE CHUTE — Residents of Little Chute believe it takes a village to raise a child. Led by St. John Nepomucene Parish, the villagers and their neighbors have packed 100,000 meals that will be sent to children in need around the world as part of the Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) program. About 500 volunteers gathered on Dec. 2 and 3 at

St. John Church to pack the meals.

Feed My Starving Children is a Christian nonprofit organization that has been providing meals for children in schools, orphanages, clinics and meal programs around the world since 1987. The organization's goal is to break the poverty cycle in places such as Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and nations in the Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia.

Last year, more than 1 million volunteers were

engaged nationwide. Each meal costs about 25 cents, so \$80 feeds one child for a year. This year, parishioners at St. John recruited friends, families, neighbors and community organizations to help meet their commitment to raise \$22,000 and pack 100,000 meals. They surpassed the financial goal very quickly and were over \$35,000 within less than two months.

Our full story appears in the Dec. 9 issue.

5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

The Three Kings

PATRICIA KASTEN | THE COMPASS

- 1 The number of Magi who came to Bethlehem is not listed in Matthew's Gospel (2:1-12).
- 2 We now say there were three Magi because they brought three gifts. Their gifts were expensive, so they later came to be called kings.
- 3 Later still, the Magi came to represent the three known continents of the time: Asia, Europe and Africa.
- 4 The word "Magi" comes from a Greek word, *Magos*, meaning a member of a learned, priestly class.
- 5 The three Magi are traditionally named Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar.

Kasten recently published a book on the Magi: "Journeys with the Magi."

Have a Blessed Christmas

These snow covered days and frigid temperatures are certainly doing their part to put us in the mood for the Christmas

holidays. Advent is a time of deeper appreciation of the great



BISHOP'S CORNER

Bishop David Ricken

lengths of love to which our Lord has gone to save us from a life of desperation.

Last spring, in *The Compass*, we provided a beautiful insert featuring the theme of the Love of the Merciful Father. God's love is so comprehensive

and his mercy so thoroughgoing, that his love has become one of us in everything but sin. The Word has become flesh and blood in everything but sin, in the person of Jesus Christ.

The fact that God the Father would choose

a very young woman, (probably age 13 or 14) formed in a deep life of faith in the Jewish tradition; and selected from the lowest caste

of her own people, choosing to be born in the humblest of circumstances — this is living historical proof of the depth and breadth of that merciful love.

My prayer for all of you, this Christmastime, both personally and as a family, is that you expand in your awareness of how much God loves each one of you and your family, his family, the church and all of humanity and creation. This little babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, born in a manger, was the very Word God spoke in the beginning to create all of time and history. WOW!

May you meditate on these deep mysteries and have a Blessed Christmas Mass and a joyous Christmastime together in the days ahead!

"My prayer for all of you ... is that you expand in your awareness of how much God loves each one of you and your family."

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New Subscribers Only

Elementary students at St. Thomas Aquinas Academy in Marinette were busy during this Advent season. Each week of Advent, they chose projects that gave them the opportunity to engage in outreach and support in the community. Students collected games and toys for the St. Vincent de Paul Society, filled totes with supplies for the emergency homeless shelter at Abundant Life Mission in Menominee, Mich., and rang bells for the Salvation Army.

Parish SNAPSHOT



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