



▲ George Gentzler and Mary Conlon stand in front of an allegorical sculpture of mathematics in Wiblingen Monastery Library in Ulm, Germany.

‘God was guiding’

Couple discovers how they want to give

BY ALICIA HASTINGS

When meeting with their financial advisor, Mary Conlon and George Gentzler were encouraged to set up an estate plan. The married couple decided they wanted to leave a gift to the Diocese of Raleigh but did not know where or how to assign their funds.

Mary’s father was of Irish and Polish descent; her mother’s family was Croatian. She grew up attending Catholic schools in Chicago and earned a Ph.D. in mathematics from Illinois Institute of Technology.

George grew up in Pennsylvania and Florida, where he attended public school and faith formation at his Catholic parish. His father was of German descent. His mother, whose parents were born in Italy, was Catholic. George attended college and graduate school in Florida.

While studying and working toward a career in engineering, he had the opportunity to participate in the Apollo 11 lunar mission in the 1960s.

Both mathematically inclined, the two met at work early in their careers. They shared common interests, including a penchant for assigning their resources toward travel rather than on material possessions.

It was during one of those journeys, about 30 years ago, when they first visited Munich, Germany.

They became interested in 18th century German architecture, noting the influence of the French Rococo and Italian Baroque styles. The region was a collection of territories governed by different ruling families, many of whom were avid patrons of architecture. The more the couple learned about the

architecture, which was an expression of the religious history of the area, the more inspired they became.

As their love of this history grew, it helped deepen their faith.

Their faith and architectural passion led them to the Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral project. They did not want to memorialize, but instead sought to help financially with the construction.

Later when their IRA Qualified Charitable Distributions became available, they wanted to continue to give to the diocese. When The Foundation was established in 2018, the couple reached out for advice on where else they could contribute.

Mary and George continued donating to various diocesan ministries, such as the Seminarian Partnership Program. They also gave to Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Raleigh as well as other non-profit community assistance programs. However, they were still looking for another area of need within the diocese itself.

Mary said it bothered her that their savings would be taxed if they did not donate to these worthy causes. She and her husband preferred to have more control of where their money was directed.

As divine intervention would have it, both Mary and George felt that God was guiding them to the Home Mission Society, a program that assists with construction and furnishing of churches and chapels. It just made sense to them to invest in The Foundation through a program that would help the smaller parishes in the diocese to grow. Their love of architecture, and more specifically religious architecture, led them to establish an endowment to support the ongoing development of sacred spaces in the diocese.

For his part, George feels that all parishes, no matter their

location, should have a nice church building to serve people. He appreciates how the Home Mission Society may be a lesser-known cause that’s gaining awareness.

Reflecting on this giving story, one could say that advice to invest and watch something grow applies to finances and physical structures, too. †



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Visit foundationdor.org to learn more about the Gentzler-Conlon Home Mission Society Endowment Fund.