

Documentary Features Incredible Stories Of Faith, One Is That Of Jerseyville Rev. Marty Smith

by Andrew Hansen
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SPRINGFIELD - God is Alive, produced by Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, available to watch for free

In a world full of selfishness, hardships, and despair, more and more people are asking, “God, are you up there?” *God is Alive*, an original documentary, created and produced by the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, answers that question in an adventurous, impactful, and local way.

Andrew Hansen, host of the Catholic podcast *Dive Deep*, editor of *Catholic Times*, and former television personality on ABC, NBC, and FOX affiliates in Central Illinois, teams up with Father Michael Trummer, parochial vicar of St. Boniface Parish in Edwardsville and chaplain at Father McGivney Catholic High School in Glen Carbon, in a journey across Central Illinois, as they find five incredible stories of faith/miraculous events in five cities that will show God is alive and help move people to put their faith in action.

“If you are full of faith, clinging to faith, or have lost hope in faith, we invite you to watch this one hour documentary that will make you laugh and cry, but most importantly, get you inspired, move you to hope, and fall in love with faith in a whole new way,” Hansen said. “We set out to find ‘jaw-dropping’ stories of miraculous events and people - who despite the walls of pain or struggles closing in - found light and joy in unexpected ways. Miracles still happen, and they are happening in Central Illinois.”

God is Alive takes viewers to Jerseyville, Springfield, Peoria, Quincy, and Decatur and features Hansen and Father Trummer traveling to each city, discussing certain aspects of faith and their own marriage and priestly vocation stories, then a feature on the miraculous event/person of incredible faith, and then the two of them reacting to each story with Father Trummer discussing how each story can help people in their own faith journey. The five stories highlight miraculous events that people will be surprised to learn about and touch on many things people struggle with such as prayer, feeling unforgiveable, and dealing with an incredible hardship.

The five stories include:

- About a year before Father Marty Smith of Jerseyville was set to be ordained a priest, he had serious doubts about becoming a priest, until God answered his prayer in a miraculous way;
- After having two abortions, Betty Parquette of Springfield felt broken and unforgiveable, that is until a conversation with a priest changed everything for her. That moment not only gave her life new purpose, but sent her on a mission to save lives;
- Bonnie Engstrom of Washington (near Peoria) faced a new parent’s worst nightmare, delivering a child with no signs of life. Needing a miracle, she turned to one specific person to intercede for her lifeless son, James, hoping God could raise him from the dead;

- Sara Reichert of rural Adams County (near Quincy) admits she used to equate intelligence with worth. Then, God gave her a daughter, Hope, that changed her entire outlook on life and faith;
- Grant Wilson's constant back pain due to having different leg lengths was always a challenge. After doctors advised against surgery, Grant turned to a healing service in Decatur. What happened there made people "gasp."

"Sharing stories and testimonies is a very powerful thing for evangelization and building faith, and it's encouraging because we are all struggling in some way," Father Trummer said. "St. Paul says that faith comes from what is heard, so it's really supposed to be part of our culture to share testimonies of ways God is active in our lives, and we are supposed to share that with other people."

God is Alive was filmed over a five-month period using two cameras and cell phones, with Hansen and Father Trummer doing all the work.

"We want to take viewers on an authentic and raw journey with us as we travel Central Illinois, so it's our hope that intimacy makes viewers connect more with the stories," Hansen said.

"The documentary was awesome, and I encourage people to go see it," said Bishop Thomas John Paprocki. "It tells some incredible stories of faith, healing, and real miracles, so go watch it."

"The documentary was fantastic," said Father Christopher Trummer (Father Michael Trummer's brother), parochial vicar at St. Agnes Parish in Springfield. "I've noticed in my own life and in my ministry being with different people that there is really not a shortage of these stories of God touching people and God working in miraculous ways, but there is a shortage of us sharing about it. I just loved it, and I highly recommend it."

To watch the documentary, go to dio.org/documentary/.