

# SAINT MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC PARISH

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## *"God Calls Us to Follow Him More Fully"* Logan Pritchard's RCIA Journey

Logan Pritchard can pinpoint a few particular times when he has been moved by the Holy Spirit. One such time was a few months ago when he heard a homily about stewardship and felt called to join the Church.

"If you have that thought of joining the Church, it is probably there for a reason," Logan says. "If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

The week after Logan felt called, he approached Fr. Stephen Graeve after Mass, shook his hand and asked about attending RCIA classes at St. Michael. Though the general classes had already started, Father was more than happy to be flexible with Logan and accommodate his schedule and where he was in his faith journey.

"Father said he would do the classes with me on a one-on-one basis on Thursdays after a class that he teaches," Logan says. "We set up the meetings ad hoc, and then began meeting in St. Michael's parish office in the afternoons."

Born and baptized into a Lutheran home, Logan attended church fairly regularly with his family and received a



*The Pritchard family – Lindsay and Logan with (left to right) Jackson, Grayson, Harrison and Colson*

solid foundation in the Christian faith.

During the RCIA process, Father and Logan discussed a book regarding Church history. Though Logan notes the variances between Protestant and Catholic beliefs on topics such as teachings regarding the Virgin Mary and the infallibility of the papacy, he was largely struck by similarities.

"I saw more commonalities than differences between their beliefs," Logan says. "It kind of made me wonder exactly what we've been fighting about

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## *Stewardship* Hannah, the Good Steward

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**W**hat should we do when our prayers are answered?

Is there anything left to do after we have sincerely thanked God for His favors? If God were a human peer, we would probably try to reciprocate by granting Him a favor in return. But the truth is that God cannot be made greater by anything that we do for Him. Instead, God receives our thanks and tells us to “go

and do likewise.” That is, He tells us to share with others the good that He has bestowed on us. And in doing so, we are really sharing God Himself. That is the definition of stewardship!

The Old Testament Book of Samuel contains one of the most poignant examples of stewardship in the entire Bible. The first chapter teaches us of an unhappy, barren woman named Hannah.

Desperate in her barrenness, Hannah prays that God will give her a son, vowing that she will raise him to be a man of God.

Imagine Hannah's elation when she was granted her prayer! When Samuel was born, her heart's desire had come true! Imagine further the pang of motherly sorrow, as Hannah kept her promise to God by taking Samuel at a young age to be the servant of Eli, the high priest. The Book of Samuel tells us that once Samuel became Eli's servant, Hannah saw her young son just once a year.

Indeed, Hannah knew that Samuel was truly a gift from God – an answered prayer. Hannah's response is that of the Good Steward – with an attitude of both gratitude and sacrifice, she gave up her son to honor God. One imagines that Hannah probably struggled with this sacrifice during those first years. She probably did not know what God had in store for her son. Yet, through her faithfulness, God used him as a gift to an entire nation. Samuel would, in time, become one of the greatest prophets of Jewish history.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand the sacrifices we make in the name of stewardship, while the results may just be impossible to miss! However, He asks that we continue to be faithful in either case. God has undoubtedly bestowed gifts on all of us – at whatever the cost, we are to “go and do likewise.”



## A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

*We Cannot Be Part-Time Christians*

Dear Parishioners,

**M**ay is traditionally celebrated in the Church as the month of Mary, our Blessed Mother. As the Mother of the Church, she provides us with an example of what it means to be a servant of God and our fellow humans, as well as how to obediently fulfill the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

As Catholics, we are called to model the life of Jesus. That can be difficult, and there are certainly challenges to living as a disciple of Christ. But living stewardship and discipleship brings intense contentment and joy to those who take that risk. As we hear in St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "All things work for good for those who love God."

After Jesus Himself, we look to our Blessed Mother as an ideal steward and an example of what stewardship means. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her life and her ministry in a total spirit of faithfulness and service. She responded to the call to be a disciple. For us to be disciples, we also need to be good stewards of the gifts we have received. Our Church and our parish are gifts to us from God.

At no point in Holy Scripture does Jesus tell us that following Him is easy. We know it is not always simple and effortless. It requires dedication and commitment. Pope Francis has said on more than one occasion, "We cannot be part-time Christians and Catholics! We should seek to live our faith at every moment of every day."

I suspect that is how Mary lived her life from

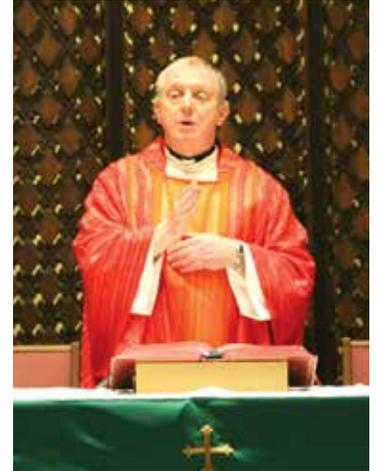
that moment she turned it over to God and His Will. So, let us vow together during this month of Mary to follow her example, and seek to be the kinds of good stewards that will make our faith community even stronger and more effective.

I pray that we all can find the strength to live and practice our faith as we should. This means being faithful to the sacraments and looking for ways to help and serve one another. We have a great parish – let us make it even greater.

As we hear in Holy Scripture, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). Pray for me, as I pray for you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Fr. Michael K. Houlihan*  
Fr. Houlihan,  
Pastor



## *The Unexpected Journey*

Sometimes, God's plans for us are nothing like what we could've ever imagined. Sometimes, He leads us up mountains and through valleys that we never would've chosen on our own. For Keyle and Kelsey Alcorn, that is their story.

"We talk about this all the time," Kelsey says. "We never would've guessed that we'd be where we're at."

Kelsey, who grew up at St. Michael's, has lived in Hastings for all but a year of her life. Several years ago, on a whim, just before giving up on online dating, she reached out to Colorado native Keyle.

"I was actually going to delete my profile that night – I thought, 'I'll just look through the pictures one more time,'" says Kelsey, who thought that Keyle was cute, but too young for her.

"I just messaged him and said, 'Good luck with student teaching,' and he thought it was a pickup line and asked for my phone number," she says, laughing. "Looking back, God totally had a hand in it."

"Now she's stuck with me forever," Keyle adds with a smile.

The couple was married in June 2015.

While Kelsey was born and raised Catholic – attending Mass every Sunday, and being a part of the youth group and a "Godparent Group" with spiritual mentors in high school – Keyle didn't grow up with faith in his life.

"I never had a religious background," he says. "I went to church a handful of times because my friend's dad was a Baptist pastor and the church was just down the street. In college, I dated a



*Parishioners Keyle and Kelsey Alcorn have been married two years this June and have been on quite the adventure, following where the Lord leads them.*

girl who was Catholic, and I felt like she forced it and I hated every second."

"I always invited him, and I told him I wasn't going to stop going," Kelsey adds. "I said, 'I get that this maybe isn't what you want, but in the future, my kids will be Catholic.'"

Keyle admits that he initially agreed to attend to appease Kelsey. But upon their engagement, something immediately changed.

"I started taking RCIA classes," says Keyle, who celebrated two years of becoming Catholic this past Easter. "Once I started paying attention and getting something out of it, that's when my mind changed. I had Kelsey, I had a job, but there was something else that was

missing and I couldn't figure out what it was. I realized I need that foundation, I need God in my life."

Not only did God surprise Keyle and Kelsey with each other, and Keyle becoming Catholic, but His plans for their careers were also a bit different than they'd envisioned. Kelsey, who had originally planned to be an English teacher, now works with at-risk adolescent boys at the Regional Center.

"I thought I'd be teaching novels, and instead I tell kids not to cuss," Kelsey says, smiling. "It's a whole different ballgame, but I wouldn't give it up for anything."

Keyle, who never planned to work in Catholic education, was hired at St. Michael School, where he has now been a teacher for the past three years. He currently teaches third grade

# y: Meet the Alcorn Family

and coaches middle and high school wrestling.

“With teaching, you can see the differences you make every single day,” Keyle says. “Every single day, I walk into my classroom and it’s a new challenge.”

Since getting married, the Alcorns have also experienced struggles, forcing them to persevere through suffering they would’ve never imagined.

“We have not been able to have kids of our own,” Kelsey says. “It was the hardest thing that we’ve dealt with in our marriage – I was crying every day. You don’t think [infertility] is going to happen to you. We went through a lot of emotions and heartache and praying and crying.”

After struggling for a year, God led the Alcorns to begin the process of becoming foster parents. After going through the process and becoming approved, they received a call about two siblings in need of a foster home.

“I freaked out and thought ‘I can’t do this!’” Kelsey says. “Keyle said, ‘I’m going to go pray at Adoration, but I have to tell you, there are two kids who need a home and love, and we have a bedroom and love to give, and that’s all I have to say.’ And he walked out.”

Needless to say, last fall, the sister and brother pair joined their family, along with, for a short time, their infant brother.

Their journey thus far as foster parents has already been filled with many moments of both joy and great sorrow. The sibling’s baby brother was reunified with his biological parents after spending just over three months with the Alcorns.

“It was not what we thought foster care was going to be about,” Kelsey says. “But for now, we still have these two and we’ve grown to love them. If it were up to us, they would stay with us forever. Foster care is not quite what we thought, but has brought a lot of experience and eye opening things to our life.”

They’ve had beautiful moments of sharing their faith with the children, especially as they’ve

been able to attend St. Michael’s School.

“[Our foster son] has focusing issues, but he absolutely loves Mass and so we’ve been sitting up towards the front so he can pay attention,” Keyle says. “A month and a half ago, at school, they were teaching him the Our Father in song form. He caught onto it instantly and sang it eight times that night. He always makes up songs about loving God and loving Jesus.”

During this time, the couple also discovered the Pope Paul VI Institute, which treats infertility using Natural Family Planning charting to address and treat roots causes of infertility, in accord with Catholic Church teaching. Kelsey will go through treatment, hoping to resolve underlying issues, and possibly allowing them to conceive in the future.

Keyle emphasizes the fact that they support each other in their faith, especially when one of them is struggling in a particular way.

“A lot of times, I’ll struggle, ‘I don’t understand what’s going on, and I hate this,’” he says. “And Kelsey’s always there, reminding me to ask God for help.”

The Alcorns have experienced a lot of opportunities to trust God in their short marriage, but the wisdom they’ve gained from their suffering is far beyond their years.

“We’ve seen how God has worked in our life,” Kelsey says. “I didn’t think I’d meet anyone and get married, and then I met Keyle. We didn’t think Keyle would get a job, and then he ended up at St. Michael’s. If you would’ve asked us at this time last year at this time, I didn’t think we would’ve had foster kids right now. Everything is up in the air right now, we have two beautiful kids we would adopt in a heartbeat or the kids could go back, the surgery could work or not work. But it comes full circle – we’re back to ‘Lord, you show us the way and we’ll follow.’”

For more information on Pope Paul VI Institute and infertility treatments approved by the Catholic Church, please visit [www.popepaulvi.com](http://www.popepaulvi.com).

## *The Blessings of the Catholic Mass*

It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States, many of us wonder why we must go to Mass on Sunday.

However, if we really understood what the Mass is and how we participate in the celebration, we would instead be asking why we are, as sinful human beings, blessed with the opportunity to participate in the holy Mass. If we simply understood and recognized that God's infinite goodness allows us to do so, we would be eager to go to Mass on Sunday and every other day of the week.

It is true, however, that all Catholics are obliged to "Keep holy the Lord's Day" by sharing in the Mass. But why are we obliged?

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the center of our faith. It is "the summit toward which all activity of the Church is directed" and it is "the font from which all her power flows" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 10). It does not exhaust the activity of the Church, but is most certainly her greatest work.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is literally re-presented to the Father during Mass, and Christ allows us to join with Him in offering that sacrifice. Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

Believe it or not, the sacrifice of Calvary is really, truly happening at our parish, every time the Mass is offered.

Our participation in Mass gives us the strength and the graces we need to live our lives as Christ's

disciples. So what does this mean for us?

This means we have a front row seat to the sacrifice of Calvary. Given such a gift, how can we not accept it?

We also have a chance to join in Jesus' sacrifice by offering our own prayers and petitions. As an example, what better gift could we give deceased loved ones than the offering of prayers for their souls in purgatory?

Most importantly, we have the opportunity to receive the Eucharist, followed by quiet time, when we offer sincere thanks and allow God's graces to fill us. Think of all you are missing when you do not properly prepare yourself to receive the Holy Eucharist.

We ought to joyfully head to Church each Sunday, eager to give God glory in the greatest way we can! Attending and actively participating in Mass every Sunday is our obligation as Catholics. But we should not allow the fact that our attendance is "required" to stop us from going. Nor should we allow our laziness to overshadow the amazing privilege and the many blessings that lay before us in the Mass.

The pope and the bishops direct us to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy every Sunday because they know there is no better way to keep holy the Lord's day — giving God thanks for all He has done for us in the most powerful way possible. They know that, through the Mass, we gain the graces necessary to live our lives in this world.

Our ability to participate in the Mass is a wonderful gift, not a great burden. May Christ enlighten our minds and hearts to clearly see the wonders of the celebration, and give us great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate.

***Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?***

# Blessing and Sustaining Our Parish: *The Altar Society*

When parishioner Jackie Kassebaum first got involved in St. Michael's Altar Society, she had no intention of taking on a leadership role. New to the parish at the time, Jackie was just looking for a way to get involved and "do her part." And, after exploring her options, the Altar Society seemed a good way to begin.

"I began attending the meetings and, of course, being a newbie I got asked to become the Vice President right away," Jackie says. "I asked to pray about it first, and when I came back the next month, they still hadn't found anyone. So I agreed to do it, but said I didn't want anything to do with being President."

God, as they say, has a sense of humor, for Jackie is not only serving as the ministry's current President, but is also becoming increasingly involved in the Altar Society at the diocesan and national levels. Over the years, Jackie has fallen in love with this humble ministry of service that enables women to truly make a difference in the Church at whatever level and to whatever extent they can.

"We help offset parish costs for things like hosts, altar candles, and even paying for bills at the rectory or providing extra funds for various church ministries," Jackie says. "We also assist with making the meals for the funeral dinners and do a wide variety of service projects. It's just a miscellaneous sort of ministry and you can be involved however you want to be."

To help coordinate all of these endeavors, the Altar Society members meet the second Tuesday of each month following the 7 p.m. Mass in the St. Michael's family room. There, they are able to enjoy fellowship with one another, delegate various jobs and responsibilities, and plan large events such as the annual Salad Luncheon or the Chili Cook-off.

With so many different aspects to the ministry, the Altar Society beautifully allows women of the



parish to use their time, talent, and treasure in a way that both blesses and sustains our faith community. This is done in countless ways, from baking pies and desserts, spending hours planning fundraisers, to ordering the necessary materials for the sacred liturgy. And in the process, says Jackie, women become even more passionate about their church and their faith.

"I feel that without our ladies, who volunteer in so many ways, the church wouldn't survive financially," Jackie says. "It also truly gets the women of the parish involved. We truly come together as a community to help the church, becoming even more invested in it."

As the mother of four daughters, Jackie also feels that serving in ministries like the Altar Society is important because it enables her to model stewardship to her own children. By giving of her time and talent in service of God's Church, she is able to show her daughters, now young women and mothers themselves, what it means to be a good steward specifically as a woman of God.

"When you are raising your children, they see that you do this volunteering and that you are living stewardship," Jackie says. "So when they grow older, they also feel that this is part of their responsibility to give back through their own time and financial support. It really teaches your kids to become involved themselves."

*We invite all women of the parish to consider joining this important ministry of service. There is no such thing as too small of a gift, and you will be amazed by the widespread effects of this ministry. To get involved, simply show up at the next Altar Society meeting or contact Jackie Kassebaum at 402-469-7076.*

# SAINT MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC PARISH

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## *Logan Pritchard's RCIA Journey*

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all these years.”

This Easter, Logan will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and fully join the Church. He is most looking forward to receiving the Eucharist alongside his wife, Lindsay, a lifelong Catholic. Logan and Lindsay have been married since 2004 and have four children – Jackson, 7; Grayson, 3; Harrison, 3; and Colson, 2.

“I remember walking up to Communion as a family and our 3-year-old asking why I didn't receive ‘anything,’” Logan says. “I want us to worship together and participate in Communion together on a regular basis.”

As their children get older, Logan and

Lindsay have become increasingly more involved in the faith community and are overwhelmed by the amount of support they have received from parishioners.

Logan would encourage anyone considering joining the Church or even learning more about the faith to pursue resources available through FORMED.org.

“The courses through FORMED.org were so helpful,” Logan says. “I went through two or three of those videos a week and felt a spiritual awakening. Check it out. God calls us to follow Him more fully. Let's not ignore the call.”

### **LITURGY SCHEDULE**

#### **Sunday:**

*Saturday Vigil 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m.  
and 11:00 a.m.*

#### **Weekday:**

*Mon-Fri 7:30 a.m. & 8:10 a.m.  
(School Mass)  
Saturday 8:00 a.m.*

*If you would like more information  
about the RCIA process at  
St. Michael, please contact the  
parish office at 402-463-1023.*