

# SAINT MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC PARISH

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## *“Second to None” Chili Cookoff to Warm up Parishioners This Month*

People always come to church to find something to warm their souls – but this time of year, parishioners will find something to warm their bodies as well. The St. Michael’s “Second to None” Chili Cookoff and Soup Supper is coming this Jan. 22, and all in our community are invited to spend an afternoon tasting delicious chilis and soups while enjoying fellowship and a little friendly competition.

“Last year was our first ever, so this year we’re calling it ‘second to none,’” says Parish Council of Catholic Women – PCCW – member and event organizer Deb Lespreance. “We’ve always had the soup supper, but we dropped it for a few years because it was a lot of work. Then, we needed to raise funds for a project we were doing for the rectory water damage. We decided to bring it back, add a twist, and make it a little more fun.”

That fun will include the opportunity for cookoff contestants to dress up, decorate their tables, and show off their best recipes. Those who choose to participate will be judged anonymously – not only on their chili,



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## *“Second to None” Chili Cookoff to Warm up Parishioners This Month* continued from front cover



but also how it is served. Awards are given for best presentation, best costume and judge's choice. Those who come to taste will vote for their favorite by making a donation at the table they think serves the best chili.

As Deb explains, each dollar donated will go directly to the parish general fund. The event is being organized by the PCCW, better known as the Altar Society. Deb says she wants people to know that all parish women over the age 18 are considered members of this philanthropic group of women.

“We do the funeral dinners at the request of the family, we also are involved in a lot of things on the diocesan level,” she says. “We have two seminarians right now, so we support them with cash for their tuition. In the fall, we have a diaper drive for Wellspring Pregnancy and Health Center, and last year we made a large contribution to St. Gianna Women's Homes in Lincoln.”

Deb says she hopes events like the chili cookoff will encourage more women to take part in PCCW activities for the spiritual benefits like fellowship and being able to contribute to the church in an easy way.

“You enjoy the fellowship, but you're still doing things and being a part of the church,” she says. “To do it by yourself isn't so much fun – to do it with other people is. You get to meet some people of really deep faith without even realizing it.”

As for the cookoff, Deb says potential entrants should prepare a roaster-sized container or approximately 14 quarts of chili for tasting – “the more, the better!” – and bring their own ladle and chili embellishments. St. Michael's will provide tasting cups and spoons.

*There is no deadline to enter the chili cookoff, but contestants should contact Deb Lespreance at 402-705-2569 or Jackie Kassebaum at 402-469-7076. The chili cookoff will begin at 5 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 22. The charge for adults is \$7 and children 6-12 are \$4. Children under 5 are free. Soup and cinnamon rolls are also available for a separate charge. Entrants must arrive by 3 p.m. to set up.*

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

*A New Year, New Challenges,  
New Opportunities*

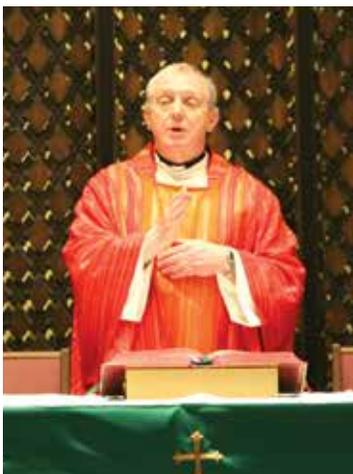
Dear Parishioners,

**I**t is a new year, and it is my prayer for all of you – and for me, as well – that we can take new steps on our faith journeys, and seek new ways to live out discipleship and stewardship.

Pope Francis once commented on his perspective of our modern approach to life. He said, “Certainly, possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want more, never satisfied. I have learned that the most important thing is to put Christ in your life, place your trust in Him, and you will never be disappointed.”

The pope has been called “the world’s parish priest.” As we pray for one another in this New Year, may we all ask the Lord to help us appreciate Pope Francis’ approach to life, his simple way of seeing things, and his very basic way of appreciating things. I would hope that we see this year as a time for opportunity, a time to deepen our relationship to Christ, and for that matter to one another.

If we really wish to change our lives and the lives of others, there are two easy ways to do it. We are blessed with many opportunities in this parish to pray, but as much as it is important for us to take advantage of those, we also need to develop a strong personal prayer life. Recall the young



Samuel, who was not quite sure what to do with his life, or what direction to go. When he finally settled on that one important prayer, “Speak, Lord, for I am listening,” Samuel gave us the hint as to what we need to do. Prayer is a two-way street, and part of that is taking the time to listen to God.

The second important way is to exude joy. Christ certainly called us to do that. Pope Francis has had much to say about joy, as well. The Holy Father says, “Joy cannot be held at heel; it must be let go. Joy is a pilgrim virtue. It is a gift that walks –

walks on the path of life, that walks with Jesus... proclaiming joy, lengthens and widens that path.” We must seek that joy and then we need to share it. That is truly our call. Joy translates quite easily into “love your neighbor.”

Yes, there may be challenges ahead in 2017, but we must focus on the opportunities, and then exert the effort to benefit from those opportunities. Happy New Year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Houlihan,  
Pastor

## A Family Built on . . . Meet the

If you tried to find a family that has spent more time inside the walls of our Catholic schools than Rich and Melissa Clark, you would most likely come up empty-handed! Not only is Rich an alumnus of Hastings Catholic Schools, but the Clarks' 10 children are all former or current Hastings Catholic Schools students, as well. Their oldest children – Joseph, Clare, Augustine, and Elizabeth – are all graduates of St. Cecilia, while Samuel and Benedict currently attend St. Cecilia, and Maximilian, Matthias, Veronica, and Peter attend St. Michael's. For the Clarks, keeping the Catholic faith central to their children's daily lives both at home and at school is a top priority. Rich and Melissa strive to impart a love of faith and service in their family by staying involved in the parish, nurturing family friendships with religious men and women, and serving others.

Rich first came to St. Michael's at the age of 6, when his family moved to Hastings. At the time, St. Michael's was in the process of relocating across town, and the bishop was looking to sell the old convent as a private residence. When Rich's parents bought the convent and turned it into their family home, they initiated a friendship with the nuns that had lived there. Soon, cultivating friendships with the religious became a natural part of Rich's life.

Rich remembers those early days in Hastings well.

"Mom would invite the nuns over every so often," he says. "So, from when I was a little tike on, there was always a religious person in and out of the house, talking with mom and dad. Nuns were always a part of the school system – it was just one big community. There were priests at the high school and they influenced me, too. You can be a friend to a priest – I learned that from my folks.



*For the Clarks, living out their faith each day means making the time to serve the parish and community.*

And that carries forward to this day, because I have good friends that are priests, and they come over."

Maintaining close ties to those in religious life is also important to Melissa, who values the time their family is able to spend with our parish priests and other religious men and women.

"I cook three suppers a week for the priests," she says. "My husband and one of the smaller children usually bring it to them. For us, it's normal to have a priest around a lot. It's pretty neat for our kids to be exposed to that."

In addition to making faith the center of their home life, the Clarks have chosen to send their children to Catholic schools that nurture and reinforce the faith and values they are taught at home. Melissa, who serves on the Faith Committee of the schools' Unity Board, believes that developing the faith life of the students is an essential part of their education.

"At school, the faith is a part of their daily lives,

*"God must give me the ability to make the time for stewardship, because it's nothing I've done on my own. It's by God's grace. I think at some point, you have to realize that our faith just isn't our own. It's something you have to give to everyone else. It's an ongoing building – if you're ever sitting, you're going backwards!" – Melissa Clark*

# Faith and Service: The Clarks



*The Clark family – (back row, from left) Elizabeth, Augustine, Joseph, Samuel, Benedict, Clare, Maximilian; (front row, from left) Peter, Matthias, Rich, Melissa, Veronica*

the entire time, every day,” Melissa says. “The kids have interaction with the priests and nuns on a daily basis. Everybody can teach my kids ABCs, but not everybody can teach the faith. The kids are learning to be what they practice in the Catholic faith.”

For the Clarks, living out their faith each day means making the time to serve the parish and community, and to cultivate an active family prayer life. The family attends Wednesday Holy Hour on a regular basis and spends an hour each Sunday transporting leftover bread from local grocery stores to Catholic Social Services. Rich is a Fourth Degree Knight in the Knights of Columbus, and he and Melissa serve as the Pro-life Chair couple for the organization. The couple also helps with the bishop’s annual Charity and Stewardship Appeal – formerly the Diocesan Development Program, or DDP.

While it is certainly not always easy for a family of 12 to find time to spend together in prayer and active stewardship, the Clarks trust that God will always provide.

“God must give me the ability to make the time for stewardship, because it’s nothing I’ve done on my own,” Melissa says. “It’s by God’s grace. I think at some point, you have to realize that our faith just isn’t our own. It’s something you have to give to everyone else. It’s an ongoing building

– if you’re ever sitting, you’re going backwards!”

Rich agrees that making the time to give back comes with the recognition that our gifts are not our own, and a desire to thank God for our many blessings.

“You’ve got to be grateful for what you’ve been given,” he says. “It’s not yours. I’m blessed – I have a great wife, and we’re doing our best to have great kids and have them go out in the world and be that witness to Christ. It’s an easy phrase to say, but there are times when it is pretty hard to do.

“The stewardship piece trains you to absorb the sacrifice, whether it’s using your time or talent, or putting a little extra in the tithe,” Rich continues. “One of the recent readings was about 10 lepers who were healed, and only one came back to Christ to say ‘thank you.’ By giving of your time, talent, and treasure, you’re showing God that you’re grateful.”

As the Clarks see it, St. Michael’s is not just a brick and mortar building. Instead, it is a home parish for life, and the place where their family has received the grace of the sacraments and formed irreplaceable friendships with priests, nuns and fellow parishioners alike. What a blessing we have in St. Michael’s and Hastings Catholic Schools – and in our parish families like the Clarks, whose faith and service are truly an inspiration!

## *Got Talent? Bring It to the Spotlight!*

The word “talent” often conjures up images of stage performers in the spotlight, captivating awestruck audiences with their impeccable musical or acting skills.

While these talented performers are certainly deserving of applause, the majority of the population sits hidden in the shadows, staring on in amazement while feeling overlooked — and perhaps wishing to possess such talents themselves. But even when we feel overlooked and untalented, God knows better. As Christians, we are all called to dig deep and trust that we are specially blessed with valuable talents and abilities, even if our talents aren't so obvious or don't garner applause and accolades.

Along with “time” and “treasure,” “talent” is one of the “three Ts” of stewardship. Exploring our natural inclinations and preferences, especially when guided by the intricacies of our unique personalities, can unearth God-given talents.

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same spirit,” writes St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians. “There are different forms of service, but the same Lord.”

Some people have the gift of working peacefully with children. Equipped with patience and gentleness, they are able to guide young souls to the Lord. Yet, others shudder at the thought of a classroom full of 5-year-olds, and instead seek the quiet solace of behind-the-scenes tasks — cleaning the church, sewing altar cloths or stuffing envelopes.

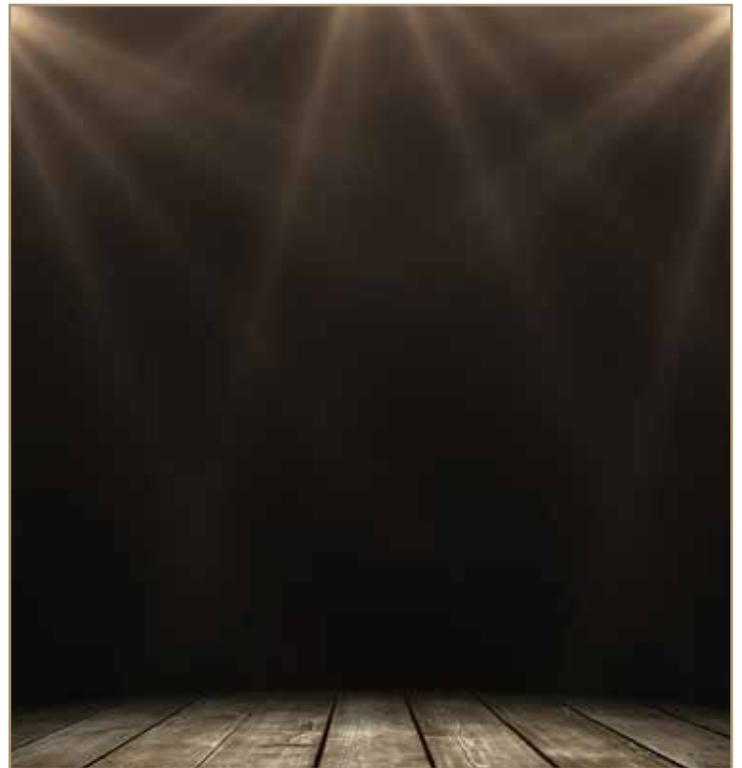
Our interests and abilities are varied, and our volunteer options are endless, as we are called to give our talents back to God in loving service. Examine your heart and prayerfully discern your gifts, then direct those gifts towards serving the people of God.

H. Jackson Brown, Jr., author of *Life's Little Instruction Book*, once said, “Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There's plenty of movement, but you never know if it is going to be forwards, backwards, or sideways.”

If our gifts of talent are not guided by the discipline of prayer, just like an octopus on roller

skates, we will get nowhere fast! Yet, if we keep our eyes on the goal of heaven and serve the Lord with joyfulness, our efforts will produce a bountiful harvest. In the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will reap bountifully.”

The next time you sit quietly in the shadows behind a glaring stage spotlight, rest assured that your talents are no less impressive in the eyes of God, and will always be “applauded” when directed to the service of His people.



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## Catholic Schools Week Inspiring a Legacy of Faith and Knowledge

Every January, Catholic schools across the country will celebrate the difference that parochial education can make in the life of a child. A former student of both St. Michael's and St. Cecilia's, our own Fr. Tom Brouillette explains what students and their families can look forward to as Catholic Schools Week approaches at Hastings Catholic Schools.

"Catholic Schools Week is Jan. 29 through Feb. 4," Fr. Brouillette says. "The theme is 'Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service.'"

On the agenda for Hastings Catholic Schools during this special week will be: Alumni Day, during which current students will hear about the impact Hastings Catholic Schools or Catholic education has had on their life, growth and development. On Grandparents Day, the school will honor our grandparents and family life, as grandparents are invited to come for Mass and stay for coffee and rolls in the parish hall. Student Appreciation Day will follow with a talent show. Faculty/Staff Appreciation Day will feature a faculty and staff vs. senior class volleyball match. And finally, Bishop's Day will round out the week with a Eucharistic Procession through the school and then to the church for a kindergarten through 12th-grade Mass.

"In the morning, we will have a Virtue Based Restorative Discipline (VBRD) activity for kindergarten through 12th-grade students, mixing younger and older groups," Fr. Brouillette says of the final day of the week.



Father says it's important to celebrate Catholic education because of the impact it has on young people as they not only prepare for college or their careers, but in modeling Christ-like behavior for their spiritual futures as well.

"We embody His teachings and we are celebrating that we have the opportunity to do so as we prepare disciples of Christ for our world," he explains.

For Fr. Brouillette, that impact was far-reaching in his decision to pursue a life in the priesthood.

"Catholic education played a major role in my decision to choose religious life," he says. "My parents and family life was of course the number-one major influence, but without Catholic education, I would not have been introduced to so many priests, religious, and lay faithful teachers and parents who helped show me the way. Some of the priests truly befriended us in our spiritual poverty and made us rich with the grace of Christ in the celebration of the Mass and in Eucharistic

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*"While we do not have all the resources of a public school system, what we do have is Christ and a culture that is complimentary in helping parents, who are the primary educators of their children, achieve their greatest goal, obligation and desire – getting their children to heaven by living virtuous lives. We have what parents want – a formation in body, mind and soul. What would I say to parents who are contemplating sending their children to our school? I would say what Jesus said, 'Be not afraid!' He will not lead anyone astray." – Fr. Tom Brouillette*

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## *Catholic Schools Week Inspiring a Legacy of Faith and Knowledge* *continued from page 7*

Adoration, challenging us to be generous beyond what we thought we were capable of.

“In fact, I am an alumnus of St. Michael’s and St. Cecilia’s,” Father continues. “It has been a great privilege, and at times a great cross, to help lead our school system to the next level of holiness, academic rigor, and extracurricular success. Our mission helped me then, and it is helping students now. We try to offer students many opportunities to encounter Christ, grow in knowledge, and become Christian witnesses in service of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Fr. Brouillette goes on to say that he hopes parish children who attend school elsewhere will continue to grow and thrive where they currently attend school, but parents who might be curious about Catholic education can use this time as opportunity to explore what it has to offer.

“While we do not have all the resources of a public school system, what we do have is Christ and a culture that is complimentary in helping parents, who are the primary educators of their children, achieve their greatest goal, obligation and desire – getting their children to heaven by living virtuous lives,” he says. “We have what parents want – a formation in body, mind and soul. What would I say to parents who are contemplating sending their children to our school? I would say what Jesus said, ‘Be not afraid!’ He will not lead anyone astray.”

### **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 on Hastings Catholic Schools,  
please call 402-462-2105 or visit their website at  
[www.hastingscatholicschools.org](http://www.hastingscatholicschools.org).*