

SAINT MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC PARISH

IN THIS ISSUE

2

*Stewardship:
The Four Pillars*

3

*Surrounded by
Saints and Good
Stewards*

4

*First Eucharist:
Receiving the Gift
of Jesus*

6

*A Significant
Moment in Our
Prayer
The Presentation
of the Gifts*

7

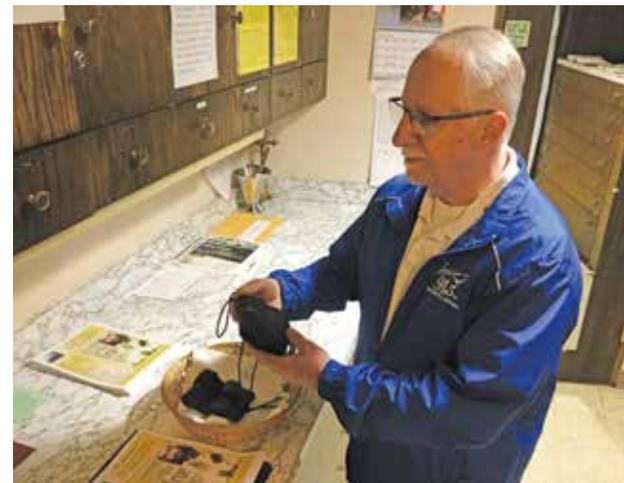
*For the Westons,
Faith and
Stewardship
Are Truly Their
Lifblood*

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion Bring Christ and Joy to the Homebound

When Jesus founded His Church here on Earth, He gave us the most precious of gifts. At each and every Mass, we are blessed beyond measure by the opportunity to receive the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. There are some faithful disciples, however, who are physically unable to attend Mass. Following the call of Jesus to care for the most vulnerable among us, our parish ensures that no one misses the opportunity to partake in Holy Communion.

In addition to their various duties serving at the altar during Mass, some of our parish acolytes also bring the Eucharist to the homebound and those in nursing homes. Scott Bonham, who has been an acolyte in our diocese for over 20 years, began serving our parish as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) to the homebound a few years ago.

"It's wonderful being able to bring Christ to them in their homes and meeting them where they are," he says. "The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith, and being able to bring that to them is awesome."



Scott Bonham prepares to take Holy Communion to the homebound.

By bringing the Eucharist to those who are unable to attend Mass, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are, in a sense, extending the walls of our sanctuary to include everyone in our faith community. When Scott serves as an EMHC, he is often accompanied by his wife, Deb. In addition to offering the Eucharist to the homebound and those in nursing homes, the couple takes the time to pray and talk with the people they visit.

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STEWARDSHIP



THE FOUR PILLARS

You've heard about the three Ts of stewardship, but what about the four Ps?

The three Ts – Time, Talent, and Treasure – describe the personal gifts we offer to the Church. The four Ps are the Four Pillars of Parish Stewardship described by the renowned pastor Msgr. Thomas McGread. They are the hallmark of a stewardship parish – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. Let's take a look at each of them to understand how we can improve in each area.

HOSPITALITY

CHRISTIAN KINDNESS

“When I was a stranger, you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). The Gospel teaches that whenever we welcome the least of our brothers or sisters, we welcome Christ Himself. That is why the first mark of a stewardship parish is hospitality. Being friendly is one of the first ways we can be Christ-like toward others.

Modern Catholic parishes are often so large and have so many Masses that many parishioners don't know one another. To create a sense of community, be sure to smile and greet others as you enter and exit the Church. Let's try harder than ever to be a welcoming community.

PRAYER

HEART-TO-HEART WITH GOD

“Do not become so involved in the work of the Lord that you forget the Lord of the work,” a seminary professor once taught. In other words, don't get so caught up with parish projects and outreach efforts that you forget to draw aside to spend time with God in prayer. Every great saint has taught that prayer is the most essential component in the life of the Christian. Through prayer, we nurture our most important relationship – the one that will last for all eternity.

A healthy prayer life should include communal prayer such as Mass, as well as personal prayer and family prayer. The two biggest obstacles to prayer are lack of time and lack of understanding of how to pray. We have to schedule time for prayer just as we would for an important appointment. And we have to learn how to pray from other people. Many saints have written spiritual books that describe different methods of prayer.

FORMATION

CONTINUOUS CONVERSION

Pope John Paul II always emphasized ongoing conversion. From childhood through adulthood, our whole life must be a process of drawing closer to God. He never stops calling us forward to learn more and to examine ourselves more deeply.

Very often our society values material things more than interior virtues. But as personal experience shows, when we finally acquire the car or house or “toy” that we wanted so badly, it doesn't really satisfy. On the other hand, we don't tend to desire spiritual virtues with the same kind of longing, but when we actually have them, we find them far more rewarding than material things.

SERVICE

LOVE IN ACTION

“Amen I say to you, whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). This Scripture was one of St. Teresa of Calcutta's favorites. Each time she picked up a poor and hungry child, she knew she was ministering to Christ. While we may not view ourselves as saints, we too are called to such heroic service right within our own community. As St. Teresa of Calcutta said, “To be a saint is not the privilege of a few, but the duty of everyone.”

We have many service opportunities right here within our own parish. If you have the willingness to serve and take the initiative to find where you are needed, you'll find that there is no end to the families and individuals who truly need help. How can you reach out to them in love?

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Guardian and Steward of God's Choicest Treasures

Dear Parishioners,

As we transition from May to June and begin to see new life begin in the fields around Hastings, there are other things that are winding down, wrapping up and ending. From school and religious education to many of our other ministries, some of our customary parish activities are going on a short hiatus over the summer.

We also see another transition as we move from May to June. In May, we celebrated Mother's Day and honored the Blessed Virgin Mary with a month dedicated to her. In June, we celebrate Father's Day, providing an opportunity to consider this man who humbly accepted his role as Guardian of the Redeemer, much in the same way that the Blessed Virgin Mary accepted her role as Mother of the Redeemer.

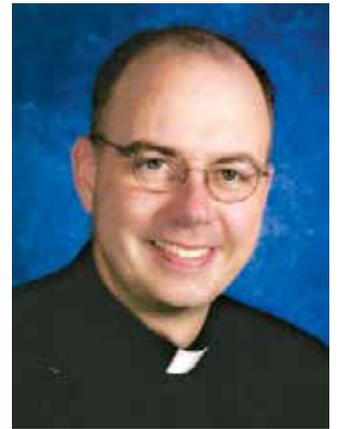
St. Joseph does not have much to say in the Bible — actually, he says nothing at all, indicative of his humility and understanding. But in Scripture, we see him as a man of action. He, like Mary, was obedient. He was selfless. He was a worker, and, in his own quiet way, he was a leader — an example to all of us. St. Joseph is the patron saint of fathers, workers, and the universal Church. Pope Leo XIII once wrote that:

The reasons why St. Joseph must be considered the special patron of the Church, and the Church in turn draws exceeding hope from his care and patronage, chiefly



arise from his having been the husband of Mary and the presumed father of Jesus... Joseph was in his day the lawful and natural guardian, head and defender of the Holy Family... It is thus fitting and most worthy of Joseph's dignity that, in the same way that he once kept unceasing holy

watch over the family of Nazareth, so now does he protect and defend with his heavenly patronage the Church of Christ.



If we could entrust ourselves to St. Joseph's patronage and emulate him in some small way each day, we would be closer to becoming the disciples Christ has called us to be.

In a certain way, Joseph was a steward — taking care of what was entrusted to him. Pope Pius IX tells us that God made Joseph “the lord and chief of His household and possessions, the guardian of His choicest treasures,” Jesus and Mary.

We do not have to look far in our community to find other good stewards, entrusted with God's treasures. They are all around us. They may be sitting near us at Mass. They may be part of our own families and households. Look around and notice that they are always there, serving in a variety of ways, even outside of the parish and Church. There are people in our communities and neighborhoods who show us what it means to be a good steward, and they are not necessarily Catholic.

As we consider St. Joseph as guardian and steward of God's choicest treasures, may St. John Paul II's prayer become our prayer:

May St. Joseph become for all of us an exceptional teacher in the service of Christ's saving mission, a mission which is the responsibility of each and every member of the Church: husbands and wives, parents, those who live by the work of their hands or by any other kind of work, those called to the contemplative life and those called to the apostolate.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Jeremy Hazuka,
Pastor

First Eucharist: Receiving the

It's sometimes referred to as the "Source and Summit" of our faith — the gift that nourishes our belief and is also the high point of our faith as Catholics. It is the Eucharist.

As Catholics, we hold the unique belief that in the Eucharist, Holy Communion, we are invited to receive our Lord, truly present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. Our eternal God humbles Himself to be united with us in this sacrament. Unfortunately,

"We have a book we share with our children called A Handshake from Heaven, and I love it because it relates receiving the Eucharist to God reaching down from heaven and touching your hand. [Communion] is the place where you are physically touching God. I try to keep that frame of mind when I'm receiving Communion. Having to walk that walk with your children and help put it into words for them, it definitely helps to remind you of just how special it is." — Dr. Suzanne Greenquist

for many of us, it's a gift that can easily be taken for granted, as we have the opportunity to receive Jesus each Sunday — or even more often — at Mass.

However, if you're looking for inspiration in deepening your appreciation of the Eucharist, perhaps you need not look any further than our second-grade students.

Each year, our second-graders prepare to receive the gift of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for the first time, and their excitement is contagious.

"The sacraments are so special because they allow an entire parish and faith family to celebrate and re-celebrate that sacrament," says parishioner Dr. Suzanne Greenquist, whose second child received his First Communion this past April. "First Communion is one of my favorites because if we could all feel like those children every time we receive Communion and be so excited — it's so special to watch the looks on their faces, as they get ready for that."

Suzanne and her husband, Matt, who entered into the Catholic Church in 2014, have grown in their appreciation of the Eucharist over the years and do their best to share it with their five children.

"We have a book we share with our children called *A Handshake from*



Collin and several of his friends who received their First Communion on Divine Mercy Sunday.

Gift of Jesus

Heaven, and I love it because it relates receiving the Eucharist to God reaching down from heaven and touching your hand,” Suzanne says. “[Communion] is the place where you are physically touching God. I try to keep that frame of mind when I’m receiving Communion. Having to walk that walk with your children and help put it into words for them, it definitely helps to remind you of just how special it is.”

Suzanne tries to make the Eucharist a priority, both with her whole family and individually.

“Sunday Mass is a priority for our family, and receiving the Eucharist as part of Sunday Mass is a way for our whole family to get a solid start to the week ahead and put things in perspective, and give us the strength to go out in the world and do what we’re being called to do,” says Suzanne, who also tries to attend daily Mass at the school with her youngest children at least once a week, and pray in adoration whenever possible.

“It’s a huge blessing,” she adds. “Also, with our young children, from toddler age, I try to turn their attention to the altar during the consecration, just by pointing and saying ‘Jesus.’ I hope it starts that thought process of them realizing that there’s something special taking place up there.”

For her children, Suzanne hopes that, as they grow, their faith will continue to be an important part of their life, strengthened and fueled by the Eucharist.

“I hope and pray that they will always see the Eucharist and their faith as a constant in their lives as a safe place,” Suzanne says. “That’s one thing that I really appreciate about the Catholic Church — it is a constant. No matter where they are geographically or in life, it’s there waiting for them. As a parent, it’s my job to show them that and lead them to it in a way that will make them seek it out on their own.”

For more information or to register your child for First Communion preparation classes, please contact the parish office at 402-463-1023.



Suzanne and her husband, Matt, celebrated the First Communion of their son, Collin.



Each year, our second-grade students prepare to receive Jesus in the Eucharist for the first time.

A Significant Moment in Our Prayer **The Presentation of the Gifts**

Occasionally, you might hear someone jokingly refer to “halftime” during Mass – the interval following the Prayers of the Faithful, as the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins. It can be easy, even tempting, to zone out as you sit, waiting for the collection basket to make its way to your pew.

But if you pay attention, you’ll have the opportunity to enter into something deeper – a significant moment in our prayer.

It’s mentioned by St. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest Christian writers, when describing the Mass in the second century, “Bread is brought up and wine and water...”

This practice, of people bringing up the gifts, has been part of our Catholic tradition from the very beginning. Although we might think of this action as being merely practical, in reality, it serves a much deeper spiritual purpose.

Each Sunday Mass, someone is chosen, whether an usher, or another member of the parish, to bring forward “the gifts” – bread, wine, and in many cases, the collection of money that has been gathered moments before, from the generosity of the congregation. These gifts not only symbolize, but also in reality are, the work of human hands. The bread and wine are fruit of God’s creation, which, through the effort of human hands, are made into the gifts that we present to the Lord.

Certainly, the collection that is presented to the priest also serves to represent the work and sacrifices of the previous week. Sharing our monetary “treasures” is one of the ways that we embrace stewardship. It’s an opportunity to generously give back to the Lord, from the fruit of our work.

In his book *What Happens At Mass*, Fr. Jeremy Driscoll, OSB explains, “...We should not think of the collection of money at this point as some sort of banal, dirty but necessary affair. Money is our work. Money is hours of our lives. And now we give it away, we sacrifice it, for the work of the Church.”



In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul instructs Christians to “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1).

The physical act of carrying the gifts forward to the priest is meant to serve as a tangible reminder of the fact that we are all called to stewardship. We are all called to present to God our lives – our work, our talents, the struggles and victories of the past week – as an offering and gift to God.

Those who bring forward the gifts each week have the privilege and responsibility of remembering what their action represents – that we are called to give generously of our time, talent and treasure to God, who gives us His very self, at Mass. And for those sitting in the pews, tempted to “check out” for a few minutes, seeing the gifts being brought forward should serve as a powerful reminder to offer our lives back to God, through serving and honoring Him.

So next week, don’t just sit back and wait for the “halftime show.” Come to Mass a few minutes early and approach an usher to ask if you and/or your family may bring up the gifts that week. Don’t be surprised if you start to notice a change in your heart and a desire to be even more generous with God in the coming week!

For the Westons, Faith and Stewardship Are Truly Their Lifeblood

For Bill and Judy Weston, St. Michael's Parish has been an almost-constant presence in marriage. It's where their three children were baptized and raised, and it's seen them through good times and bad times. Yet, no matter what their stage of or situation in life, the Westons' faith has remained constant. Described by Judy as their "lifeblood," it's what has got them through life's storms and made them even more appreciative of their blessings.

"Faith really and truly is our lifeblood," Judy says. "It's that cushion that softens the blows of life — that anchor which holds us steady."

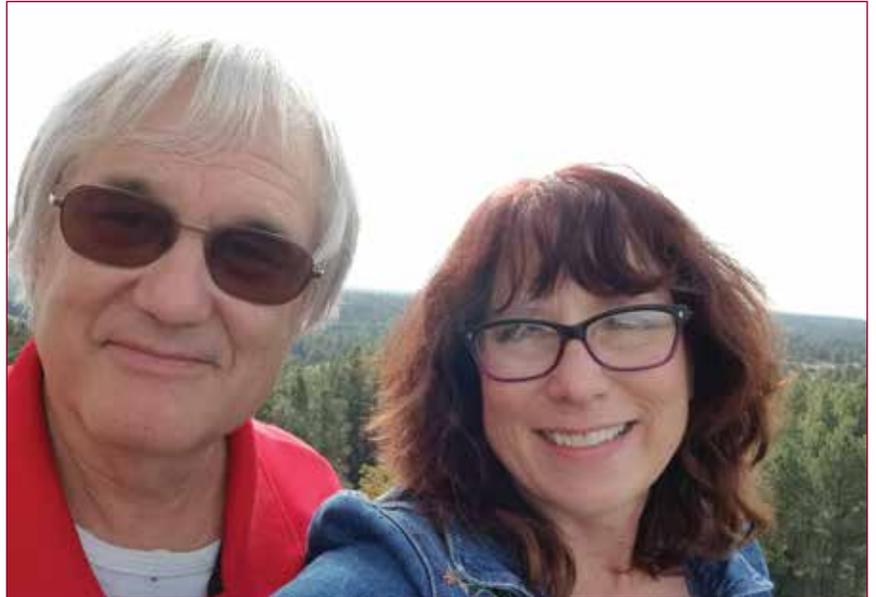
Because of faith's vital role in their life, it's been important to the Westons to give back to the Church in whatever ways possible — not merely financially, but more importantly by embracing what the couple refers to as a "spirit of volunteerism."

"We each have different talents and treasures, but it's important to remember that they all come from God," Bill says. "So, when He asks for us to do something for him through the Church, I think it's important for us to be willing to sacrifice a bit and do that."

"We're firm believers in stewardship of time," Judy adds. "Money is good and everything, but it's almost what is expected. But so often, parishes are in terrible need of volunteers. So, we try our best to serve. If they ask us, then we never say 'no.'"

Over the years, this has led the couple to teach CCD classes and volunteer with various parish youth programs, to attend Cursillo weekends, and participate faithfully in the annual Lenten Bible Study. Judy also remains actively involved in the Council of Catholic Women, while Bill is an acolyte and enjoys performing electrical work for the parish along with his mentor, Jim Schuyler.

Though it may not always be easy to fit in, embracing stewardship has led to many blessings in the Westons' lives. It's drawn them deeper into communal life, making them feel truly part



For Bill and Judy Weston, stewardship has become part of their very identity — what the couple refers to as their "lifeblood."

of the parish community. Stewardship has also strengthened their relationship with one another, anchoring their marriage more fully on Christ.

"Stewardship continues to draw us closer together," Judy says. "Since we came together as a married couple and attended those first Cursillo weekends, our commitment to each other and the faith has just grown stronger and stronger. We don't always get along, but our faith brings us back together."

"Over the years it's just really deepened our sense of community and our overall spiritual life," Bill adds.

Though Bill and Judy both feel they have a long ways left to go, stewardship has truly become part of who they are — their lifeblood. They encourage others to take that leap, embracing stewardship in their own particular ways.

"Just begin to give," Judy says, "It doesn't matter whether it's through time, talent, or treasure."

"And if you have a special talent, don't be afraid to come forward and share it with the church," Bill adds. "Sometimes it's the exact skill that they've been needing."

SAINT MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC PARISH

715 Creighton Avenue
Hastings, NE 68901
(402) 463-1023
www.stmichaelsasthastings.com

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Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

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These moments of fellowship provide the homebound with a sense of connection to our parish family. “We check in and see how they’re doing, and ask if they need anything in particular,” Scott says. “We visit and touch base with them. Then there is a Rite we follow, so we say the prayers and give the Communion. We also bring a copy of the bulletin so they can keep up with what is going on in the parish. It’s forming a community.”

Since he first began serving as an EMHC, Scott has felt his own faith life strengthened by the experience. “It helps enrich your faith to serve others,” he says. “You believe in what you’re doing, and it’s a blessing and a rewarding experience to do that, so I think it does help with faith building in that way.”

When Scott reflects on what it feels like to bring Holy Communion to others, one word stands out to him above all else — *joy*.

“We [try to convey] a joyful spirit and a joyful message,” he says. “We’re glad to see them when we come, and they’re glad to see us. There is just a joy in us bringing Communion to them.”

Here in our parish, we are blessed to have so many dedicated acolytes helping at the altar during Mass. Those who also serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the elderly, sick and homebound provide an essential ministry to many faithful followers of Christ.

“There are a lot of wonderful acolytes and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at St. Michael, and some of those guys have been doing it for many, many years,” Scott says. “Once you get started with it, you do it as long as you can. I’m just lucky to be a part of the ministry. I think it’s one of the best things we can do, to bring Christ in the Eucharist to people in their homes.”

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.*