



SAINT MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC PARISH

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"A Sisterhood Connected by Joy" at the Woman Fully Alive Retreat

From all accounts, our Woman Fully Alive Retreat on July 29 was a day full of discovery and joy, all led by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sarah Heideman and Andrea Rodriguez organized the retreat after Sarah had attended a prayer conference.

"We're in our Mothers at Prayer Group," Andrea says. "And Sarah came up to me and said, 'We need to do this.' I said 'yes,' and the Holy Spirit took off and we tried to keep up!"

The featured speakers for the day were Colleen Mitchell, blogger and co-founder of St. Bryce Missions and St. Francis Emmaus Center in Costa Rica. She also is the author of *Who Does He Say You Are?* The second speaker was Dain Finney, StrengthFinder Coach and former FOCUS Missionary.

"So many women were so thankful," Andrea says. "They thanked us. Their hearts were yearning for something like that. It was such a joy around everyone. It was a sisterhood connected by joy."

"We wanted to do something for women to find their identity in Christ, and to recognize their God-given strengths and talents as His beautiful daughters," Sarah



The message of becoming the woman God wants you to be was the primary theme for our Woman Fully Alive Retreat.

says. "We asked, 'How can we do this?'"

Sarah and Andrea publicized the retreat throughout the deanery, as well as through word of mouth. They used social media, as well. The response was enthusiastic, with 55 registering and more

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The Importance of Family Prayer

“**T**he family that prays together stays together.” This famous slogan was coined in 1947 by writer Al Scalpone, and has been frequently referenced ever since. The phrase pinpoints the true power of prayer, and the importance of making family prayer a consistent practice in our lives.

As Christian disciples, we are striving to follow Jesus – to grow in our love of Him and to serve Him through the use of our time, talent, and treasure. If we desire to follow in His footsteps, we must first begin by getting to know Him. Spending time with the Lord in prayer forms a foundation on which we can build our lives as Christian disciples, much in the same way that spending time with a girlfriend or boyfriend forms the foundation of a strong relationship.

The Christian family is the first place where children learn to pray. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls the family unit “*Ecclesia domestica*,” or “the Domestic Church” (1656). Thus, parents have a responsibility to set an example by taking time for personal prayer every day, and making family prayer a regular practice. This not only sets an example for the children, but also provides them with a faith-filled foundation and brings them closer to the Lord – forming them as grateful stewards of their time.

There are many ways in which a family can pray together. One of the most important times for prayer is before meals, where we thank God for His blessings, and for the food on our family table. Families may also share in the formal prayers of the Church, or perhaps pray a Rosary together every night. We can also thank the Lord aloud, asking Him to answer our prayers and offering Him our daily petitions. One often-suggested method of family prayer is ACTS, where we offer Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Families may also go to their church and kneel together before the Blessed Sacrament, offering prayers in Christ’s Presence.

These are just several of the many opportunities for families to pray together. Of course, prayer will be influenced by each family’s dynamics and personalities. But no matter how we pray, it is important that we make the time to do so. This will deepen the family’s relationship with the Lord, our commitment as His disciples will be stronger, and we may continually renew and foster our families’ bonds.



PRAYER OF PARENTS:

God, our Father, I thank you for the gift of my children and for the privilege and responsibility of being a parent, for this is my way of holiness. May I regard each of my children as a sacred pledge of Your love and a beautiful sign of Your confidence in me. Help me to pass on to my children our greatest treasures - faith in Your truths, hope in Your goodness, love in Your name for all. I entrust my children to Your loving care. Banish from our home any bitterness or lack of forgiveness. Let us have time, deep concern, and a sense of sacrifice for one another. Teach us never to be ashamed that we are, in name and in fact, a Catholic family striving to live in the way of Jesus, Who is head of our home. Give us Your Holy Spirit to unite us throughout this life and let the circle of our family be unbroken in the Kingdom of Your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Save Room on Your Busy Schedules for Stewardship

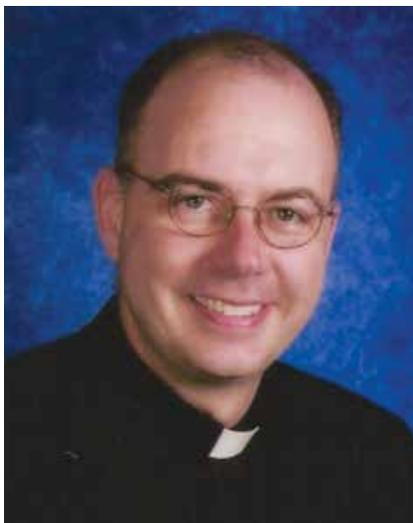
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As I begin my first school year away from teaching or administration in twenty years, I am adjusting to the change. Previously, I devoted the last days of August and the first day of September to intense preparation to assure that the new year gets off on the right foot and begins the nine-month journey without too many obstacles. While my days now are occupied by a different kind of busy, there is still a sense of anticipation when I see the grade school students in the lunch room, in the hallways, or at daily Mass. I am aware once again of the great hopes, exciting dreams, and good intentions that a new school year holds.

Even for those parishioners not directly involved in school, September marks new beginnings. Labor Day traditionally marks the unofficial end of the summer vacation season, and our calendars may reflect that. Many of you have calendars a lot like mine — they are full year-round with appointments and obligations. But even for us, things get busier in September as various organizations that took a break during summer begin their regular round of meetings again.

Nevertheless, I have a request for you as you fill up your fall schedules. First, please sharing some of the gifts that God has bestowed upon you. As Christian disciples — as stewards — we are called to return to God a portion of the Time, Talent, and Treasure He has entrusted to us. We should begin with our commitment to God as we plan our daily and weekly schedule, so that we do not offer Him just the scraps of time and energy left over after everything else.

Make this September the month you commit to singing in the choir, including attending rehearsals. Or begin working with our parish evangelization or stewardship teams. Or offer to launder altar linens once a month. Or volunteer with our



parish religious education as an aide or even a teacher. Or be a part of a group of volunteer mowers that is forming. Or join the Knights of Columbus. Or support others through Hastings Catholic Outreach. Or... you get the idea.

There are many ministries and groups within the parish where you can serve, and you will find that you receive even as you give. Hardly anyone in the parish cannot find at least one activity in which they can participate and which fits their schedule. If you are not involved in parish, make this September the month to change that.

Thinking about commitments, some people say they do not have Time for prayer. Again, it is a matter of priorities. I challenge all of us to commit time to the Lord each day, even if it is just one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be during the day. That's at least a beginning.

In Christ,

Fr. Jeremy Hazuka,
Pastor

Greg and Dayna Harhay Reflect on *"It Always Feels Like Home"*

When scientists Greg and Dayna Harhay are not in their lab at the Meat Animal Research Center, you can often find them actively living out their faith here at St. Michael – whether it be attending a weekend Mass, fulfilling their Sunday Holy Hour commitment, or participating in Marriage Harbor or the “God Teen” Ministry. If you had told them all of this just a dozen years ago, however, these two parishioners may not have believed you!

While both Greg and Dayna were raised Catholic, they had drifted away from the Church as young adults. When they were married in 2005, they weren't practicing their Catholic faith and didn't hold their first wedding ceremony in a Catholic Church. Today, so much has changed for this couple as they have rediscovered their love of the faith.

The Harhays first felt the Holy Spirit prompting them to a return to the faith while they were visiting St. Stephen's Basilica in Budapest, Hungary, during their honeymoon.

“The cathedral was really amazing, and I have relatives that immigrated who would have actually come through that area as a waypoint, so that sort of struck me,” Greg recalls. “I'm sure my relatives would have gone to that same church at some point, and I



Dayna and Greg Harhay

didn't want to end up being one of those people that don't appreciate their history. So, that's something that sort of set the wheels going.”

At St. Michael, Greg and Dayna found a vibrant and welcoming parish that made their transition back to actively living out their faith a truly wonderful experience. Fr. Houlihan led the couple through the marriage convalidation process, and in 2006, a priest in Dayna's family officiated their convalidation ceremony at his parish in Michigan. Since then,

the Harhays have become more and more involved in church life.

At the urging of our parish priests – who have enjoyed many delicious meals in the Harhay home – Greg and Dayna put their cooking skills and interest in molecular gastronomy to good use when they auctioned off “Dinner with the Scientists” to benefit the B.L.U.E. fundraiser for Hastings Catholic Schools. They have also spent time serving on the parish Stewardship Committee, and have greatly enjoyed

Their Journey Back to the Church Feels Like Home”

attending a weekend marriage retreat, followed by the monthly Marriage Harbor meetings that followed.

One of the ministries that has had the biggest impact on the Harhays’ lives, however, is the “God Teen” program that matches each lead couple with a group of high school students, beginning in their freshman year.

“It’s a program that Fr. Houlihan started, and the idea is that the ‘godparent couple’ stays with a group of kids all through their four years of high school,” Dayna explains. “We meet at our house and do different things to bring them closer to their faith. As scientists, Greg and I like to emphasize critical thinking and ask them what they believe and why they believe it. It’s a lot of fun and a great way to give these kids the tools they’ll need when they leave for college, to really be able to think about and defend their faith.”

Greg, who first felt the powerful pull of his family’s Catholic heritage during the Harhays’ trip to Budapest, feels it is greatly important to give young people a sense of the strong tradition and history of our Church through ministries such as “God Teen.”

“We’re trying to pass on the benefit that we’ve received from our own elders and do a favor for this upcoming generation,” he says. “And hopefully some of them will do the same for the generation that comes after them. It’s about stretching your wings, trying to learn new

things, getting involved, and helping kids to understand their rich heritage.”

In addition to continuing to help the teenagers in their group understand the value in the history and tenets of our Church, the Harhays’ weekly adoration hour also serves to anchor them in their faith.

“One of the drawbacks to our jobs is that it is easy to be workaholics, and we would often find ourselves working on weekends, which is not great for the soul,” Dayna says. “So when Fr. Graeve suggested we do a Holy Hour, we decided to do ours from 4:00 to 5:00 on Sundays. It’s been a beautiful time to reflect and pray and just open a dialogue with God. I’d say it’s definitely one of the bigger things that’s had an impact on our spiritual lives.”

It has now been about a dozen years since they first found their way back to an active life in the Church, and the Harhays could not be more thankful to have found a parish home here at St. Michael. This dynamic parish of welcoming, faithful people has become one of their favorite places to spend time.

Upon returning from a recent vacation, Greg reflected on what a blessing this special faith community is for all of us.

“It always feels like home when you’re back,” he affirms. “There’s no mistaking when you are at St. Michael in Hastings – it’s a bunch of really nice, godly people trying to do the best they can. The people really are the Church.”

“We’re trying to pass on the benefit that we’ve received from our own elders and do a favor for this upcoming generation. And hopefully some of them will do the same for the generation that comes after them. It’s about stretching your wings, trying to learn new things, getting involved, and helping kids to understand their rich heritage.” – Greg Harhay

A Modern Model of Sainthood *St. Teresa of Calcutta*

In the dark final years of the Cold War, a small woman — standing at barely five feet tall — offered a living counternarrative to the inhibiting fear undergirding our daily lives and our foreign affairs. Instead of living in fear, Mother Teresa acted out of love. Instead of withdrawing and isolating herself, she gave tirelessly to others.

Many of us harbor a personal connection to this saint, for we lived during the height of the media coverage of Mother Teresa's work and her friendships with Pope St. John Paul II and the beloved Princess Diana.

Long before she received the name Mother Teresa and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born on Aug. 26, 1910, in Skopje, Macedonia, the crossroads of the Balkans. The youngest of three children, Mother Teresa was raised predominately by her mother after her father's death, when she was about 8 years old. Dranfile (Drana) Bojaxhiu, Mother Teresa's mother, undoubtedly became a strong influence on her daughter's vocation, since Drana herself was a devout Catholic and known for her prayer life and her charity.

Agnes attended a Catholic primary school and, following the example of her mother, became active in their parish and sang in Sacred Heart's choir. As a young person, Agnes enjoyed reading the lives of the saints — while immersing herself in the stories of these holy men and women, Agnes first felt the stirring call to become a missionary.

At the age of 18, Agnes traveled to Dublin, Ireland, to join the Sisters of Loreto. She became Sr. Mary Teresa, named after St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and began to learn English. Within a few months of arriving in Ireland, she left for India.

In India, Sr. Mary Teresa lived at the Loreto Entally community in Calcutta, where she served as an educator and taught at St. Mary's School. After



her final profession, she became Mother Teresa and, a few years later, began serving as the school's principal.

On an ordinary day, Mother Teresa received an extraordinary call. While on a train ride to her annual retreat, Mother Teresa felt what she would describe as Jesus' thirst for souls. Soon, Jesus called her to found the Missionaries of Charity, an order devoted to serving the "poorest of the poor."

The order formally began on Oct. 7, 1950, and has grown from one woman tending the sick and dying in the streets of Calcutta to

over 4,500 religious sisters helping the poor in over 130 countries around the world. Additionally, the order grew to include the Missionaries of Charity Brothers, the Missionaries of Charity Fathers and the Lay Missionaries of Charity.

Though externally Mother Teresa joyfully and indefatigably served the poor for nearly 50 years, during the majority of this time, she experienced a "dark night of the soul," an extensive period of not feeling God's presence or hearing His voice. Other saints, notably St. John of the Cross, similarly experienced a dark night of the soul. Despite this spiritual struggle, Mother Teresa continued her work joyfully throughout her sickness and until her death on Sept. 5, 1997.

Pope St. John Paul II beatified Mother Teresa in 2003. Fittingly, a pontiff who has underscored the importance of social justice celebrated her canonization. On Sept. 4, 2016, Pope Francis canonized Mother Teresa, the "Saint of the Gutters," at the Vatican.

St. Teresa of Calcutta offers us an example of ceaseless prayer and selfless service. She is a modern model of sainthood that we can emulate in our daily lives starting with how we serve and treat the other members of our family, our faith community and all those with whom we interact on a daily basis.

St. Teresa of Calcutta, Pray for Us!

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Making the Gospel Relatable to Youngest Parishioners

As Catholics, we believe it's important for the entire Body of Christ to come together each Sunday to worship and partake in the Eucharistic banquet. This is perhaps especially important for our children who are still learning about the faith and what it means to be a Christian. Bringing them to Mass each Sunday allows them to learn through the example of the faithful around them and literally surrounds them with the very presence of Christ. Yet part of stewardship and raising our young ones in the Faith means making them feel part of the liturgy by making the Gospel message both relatable and understandable for them. This, explains Carrie Rasmussen, is exactly what St. Michael's Liturgy of the Word ministry works to do each Sunday with our youngest parishioners.

"The whole idea of Liturgy of the Word is to help present the Gospel message to our children in a way that they can understand," says Mrs. Rasmussen. "The Gospel can be a bit heavy at times for small children. So our goal is to help present the person of Jesus Christ to these children in a way that they can understand and relate."

Available each 9:30 a.m. Sunday Mass from September through May, Children's Liturgy of the Word is for parish children ages three through first grade. Children are dismissed just before the first Reading to a nearby classroom where they are able to sing songs about Jesus, listen to the Gospel, and then participate in interactive crafts and activities all aimed at helping the children understand Christ's message for the day.

"After sharing the Gospel, we always try to do interactive things to help the children understand its message," says Mrs. Rasmussen. "For example, it was fun when we talked about John the Baptist being Jesus' cousin because the kids could relate to



St. Michael's Children's Liturgy of the Word catechists (from left) include Kimberly Christiansen, Brittney Kramer, Carrie Rasmussen, and Erica Benson. Not pictured Kelsey Alcorn.

playing with their own cousins. Sometimes we'll act out the Gospel scene and there are always activities that we are able either to complete together or to send home with the children."

As a teacher and principal, it's been a great blessing for Mrs. Rasmussen and her fellow teachers to be able to use their professional talents in a parish ministry. She loves seeing the light bulbs go off in the children's minds as they begin knowing who Jesus is and understanding His great love for them.

"It's such a gift during those moments when they share and you can tell that they've really connected with the Gospel and are truly understanding it," says Mrs. Rasmussen. "I think that it fosters their relationship with and their love for the Lord much sooner when they are able to actually understand those Gospels...For myself and many of the teachers, this has been a special way to give back to the parish, using our talents and skills for the benefit of others."

Liturgy of the Word resumed on Sept. 10 and we hope that even more parish families will take advantage of this unique opportunity. And, if you are looking for a new way to serve, the ministry could use some additional classroom assistants. For more information, please contact Mrs. Rasmussen at 308-340-4483.

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“A Sisterhood Connected by Joy” at the Woman Fully Alive Retreat continued from front cover

than 60 attending, both Catholic and non-Catholic.

The day opened with Mass, followed by a continental breakfast with the speakers. The Altar Society provided the lunch, and Fr. Stephen gave a talk. After lunch, there was time for personal reflection and journaling.

“What moved me, the biggest thing, was it was such a day of beautiful thoughts and words,” Sarah says. “One of Colleen’s talks was about the specialness God desires for us. We get our identity in Christ. We accept God is good and love, and He helps us gain the confidence, and know what we are called to do. Use the talents God gave us.”

“To become a diamond, carbon has to be under pressure,” she continues. “We just have to mine the diamond. God gives us the power we need. To find our talents, we just have to seek Him and seek the diamond He has given us. This ties in with stewardship. God gives us unique and beautiful talents, and we use them. It’s a way of glorying God – God gives me this talent and I want to share what He’s given me.”

Andrea recalls one overarching message from the retreat.

“It was how Colleen really spoke about the need for healing of our hearts so we can live more fully the life God created us for,” Andrea says. “It was so beautiful and the message was well-taken.”

Although there are no specific plans to reprise the retreat next year, Andrea comments on this possibility.

“If God wants it, I’m sure He’ll make it happen next year,” she says. “God took us along with this retreat. God definitely was present that day!”

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.