



MARY

Mother of the Church

AREA CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

A Letter From Our Pastor

Introducing Our New Parish Stewardship Newsletter!

Dear Parishioners,

I am pleased to present to you our new stewardship newsletter! This newsletter will help us learn how the stewardship way of life is a disciple's response to the call to know, love, and follow our Lord Jesus Christ. Every month we will share stories that will help us better understand who we are as Catholics and individual members of God's family. The upcoming issues will feature activities and events within our Mary, Mother of the Church Area Catholic Community and how these will help change hearts, minds, and lives as we grow closer to Christ and to each other through these ministries and events. Each article will tell stories of Christ at work within us and in our community as we more intentionally engage in the stewardship way of life.



I hope this newsletter will be a meaningful way to continue learning more about our faith. As we learn more about how our fellow parishioners live out their faith in our community, we hope these stories inspire you to consider more active involvement in the life of our faith community. Perhaps this will be an opportunity to try new things.

This newsletter will help increase communication as we feature events that are coming up and share a lot of information with you. One important step in our stewardship journey will be our Annual Stewardship Renewal later this fall. The Renewal is a chance to ask ourselves how we prioritize how we use God's gifts in the Church. We will make written commitments to ourselves and God concerning how we will be more devoted with our use of time (using our time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer, and quality time with friends and loved ones); talent (using our God-given gifts to strengthen the Church through service to parish ministries and other activities), and treasure (the wise and just management of our financial resources; giving a proportionate amount of my income to the parish).

I also want to hear from you! In 2023, we will be conducting a comprehensive parish survey. We will mail a survey to each home, and I ask you to take the time to complete the survey and return it as soon as possible. Your feedback is important to me and will

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ST. JOSEPH
Bertha

ST. HUBERT
Bluegrass

ST. JOHN THE
BAPTIST
Bluffton

ASSUMPTION
OF OUR LADY
Menahga

ST. MICHAEL
Motley

SACRED HEART
Staples

ST. FREDERICK
Verndale

ST. ANN
Wadena

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The Old Testament is not the only place where we can find references to stewardship. Indeed, of the 36 parables in the New Testament, more than half of them deal with time, talent, possessions, or money. Therefore, if Jesus spoke of stewardship that much, it should be a very important part of our lives!

What Does

S + STEWARDSHIP

What comes to mind when you hear the word “stewardship”?

Do you think of it as just another way to talk about money? Do you quickly dismiss it as a notion that has nothing to do with being Catholic?

Stewardship is actually a concept that is Scripturally-based and is vital to our life as Catholics. God tells us, in the very first book of the Old Testament, “Be fertile and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all the living things that move on the earth” (Gen 1:28).

What does that mean to us today? It simply means that God is telling us, “This is yours, so take care of it.” One of the first things God tells us to do is to be good stewards of the gifts He has entrusted to us!

The Old Testament is not the only place where we can find references to stewardship. Indeed, of the 36 parables in the New Testament, more than half of them deal with time, talent, possessions, or money. Therefore, if Jesus spoke of stewardship that much, it should be a very important part of our lives!

As Catholics, we refer to the three facets of stewardship as “time, talent, and treasure.” Although these are three concrete ways to express and measure stewardship, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops tells us that stewardship is part of discipleship. Stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call in every aspect of our lives.

The Scriptures and Church traditions teach us one important point that cannot be overstated — that stewardship is primarily based on our need to give in gratitude, not on the Church’s need to receive. Of course, both the Catholic Church and our particular parish will always need money. However, we are not asked to give simply to defray costs and fund charitable programs. We are instead asked to remember our need to gratefully return a portion of our time, talent, and treasure to God, recognizing all that He has given to us.

It is important to remember that stewardship is a way of life, and not a program. True Catholic stewardship involves an ongoing call to live as followers of Christ. It takes time to find and define personal goals. You can begin by

Mean?

examining your commitments to the parish. How do you live your faith in your daily life with your family and friends? How much time do you spend in daily prayer, going to Mass, or being involved in parish ministries and activities? What percentage of your income should you give back to God every week? What talents do you have that could be used to strengthen our parish family?

In the coming months, we will be increasing and intensifying our education and communication on stewardship. We will be developing a better understanding of how stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call to discipleship. And with God’s help, changes will occur in each of our hearts as we devote ourselves to a stewardship renewal within our parish. Examine how you are currently responding to God’s call to stewardship. If God called you home tomorrow, would He proclaim, “Well done, my good and faithful servant”?

SACRISTAN MINISTRY:

Joyfully Preparing for the Mass

It's no secret that Fr. Aaron Kuhn and Fr. Gabriel Walz are busy. They have eight churches to shepherd. The weekends can be particularly hectic. Anything we can do at our parishes to help will go a long way in lightening the load for Fr. Aaron and Fr. Gabriel. The Sacristan Ministry is one such way parishioners can help.

Mike Pete has been a sacristan at St. Ann's for about 14 years. Currently, he's the only sacristan at Sunday Mass at Ann's — a job he doesn't take lightly.

Mike arrives at about 8:30 a.m. for 10 a.m. Mass and unlocks the church, turns on the lights and sound system, sets up if there is a Baptism, prepares the wine and hosts, and makes sure all is ready for Mass. He's there to help if the altar servers have questions. Some weeks, he leads the 9:30 a.m. Rosary.

"This way, when the priest arrives, they can go right into Mass," Mike says. "Our priests are very busy, so this helps."

In 2007, Fr. Don Wagner asked Mike if we would consider becoming a sacristan. Initially, Mike wasn't sure what a sacristan's role was, but he did what was asked of him.

"It can be intimidating to sign up for a ministry," Mike says. "Once you are in, you realize it isn't so bad — it's getting to know people and working with them."

For Mike, the most beautiful part of the Sacristan Ministry is preparing the wine and hosts.

"Just knowing those will turn into the Body and Blood of Christ, that means a lot," he says.

Witnessing what goes into every Mass behind the scenes has, in turn, opened Mike's eyes to learn more about the Mass.

"If you want to learn more about Mass and the Church, this is the ministry for you," he says.

Mike is thankful for the opportunity to serve and for all those he has gotten to know through this ministry. Since he locks the church after Mass, he meets people who stay



Mike Pete and his wife Debbie.

around the church for a while.

"You become friends with people you didn't know you would," Mike says.

In addition, Mike has taught religion classes for many years.

"Teaching religious education has been so interesting," he says. "I've learned more about the Bible and church than I ever thought I could."

He also uses his career experience in landscaping to oversee Calvary Cemetery.

The willingness to serve comes from the example set by Mike's parents. Mike has four brothers, one of whom is a priest, and four sisters. He was raised Catholic in Deerfield, near Owatonna. Most of his siblings are active in the church. Mike and his wife, Debbie, have four daughters.

"If you aren't involved in a ministry, I'd say give it a try," Mike says. "You'll be surprised how much you enjoy it."

**If you would like to get involved as a sacristan,
please contact Andrew Mahon at the parish office at 218-632-7313.**



GRIEF *Support Ministry* SERVES AS A GUIDE FOR T

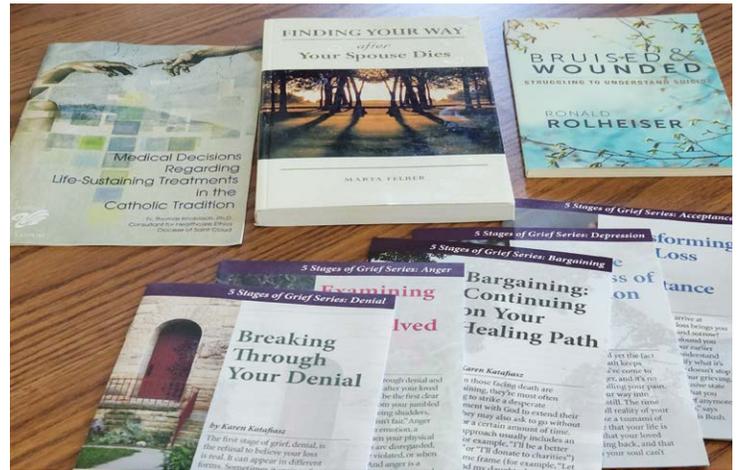
As Catholics, we are called to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ — and when someone loses a loved one, it’s a time when they need that helping hand the most. Mary, Mother of the Church ACC’s Grief Support Ministry is a resource for those navigating grief after losing a loved one. By providing emotional support, resources, and solidarity, the ministry gives the bereaved a place to process their grief journey.

“It has impacted people very much,” says ministry facilitator Lela Platt. “You see them grow and become more comfortable with themselves, and they can relate. When they first start coming to the group they hardly ever talk, and before they leave they end up telling us their whole story.”

“We also find that people who have been coming for a long time can relate to the new ones coming in very well,” adds Caren Winkels, who also serves as facilitator. “Even after the group session is over, they’re still sitting there talking to each other about everything they have gone through. When you tell your story, others will tell their stories.”

The ministry was first started in 2013 when seeds were planted by a group of parish nurses — including Caren and Lela, who are both registered nurses — who started the conversation about end-of-life medical care and legal decisions.

“The community was invited and we had several speakers and arranged for people to be able to fill out their advanced directives and plan things for end-of-life,” Lela says. “After that, a member of our parish passed away, and we were all very close to his wife, Eileen Malone. She asked if we could start a grief group, and we started meeting on Sept. 3, 2013.”



The Grief Support Group offers a number of valuable resources that may help those facing a loss.

Grief Support meets each Wednesday to attend the 9 a.m. Mass, and then following the Mass, there is a breakfast hosted at the parish. Anyone attending the Mass and/or Grief Support is invited to the breakfast — after everyone is finished eating, the group convenes.

“All eight churches in our ACC are invited to our group, and we have a variety of people who come,” Caren says. “Any age can come, including young people. We have both men and women, and even a priest who comes. Some stop, and some start again later on. Some who have been coming since 2014 still come because we’re all friends now.”

“We give a lesson each week that we meet, and we give

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“We make sure they know that everyone grieves differently, and that some of it will be short-term and some of it will be long-term. I always carry a book around that has a quote that says, ‘Gone from us, but leaving memories. Death can never take away memories, and that will always linger while upon this earth we stay.’ — Lela Platt

Ministry

THOSE MOURNING LOSSES

out copies to everyone and go through it together,” Lela adds. “We say a prayer before and after each lesson, and after reading our lesson, we discuss it and ask each person how it affects them, and what they think of it. Many will open up to us about how they felt, what they read and how important it was to them. We always tell newcomers that if they don’t feel like talking, saying anything, or reading anything, they’re not required to do any of that until they feel comfortable.”

Topics for lessons include titles such as “What is Grief?,” “The Difference Between Short and Long Grief,” “Identifying Feelings,” “The Mourner’s Bill of Rights,” “Surviving the Holidays When Grieving,” “What to Say and What Not to Say to Someone Who is Mourning,” “Confronting Painful Emotions,” “Miscarriage and Grief,” and “Grieving the Loss of a Pet.”

“We also talk about taking children to funerals,” Caren says. “I lost my father when I was 15. I was the oldest of six children, and my mother was only 36 years old. After my father died, my mother started crying in the car, the funeral director told us, ‘Girls, don’t cry, you’ll make your mother cry.’ To this day, I have trouble crying at funerals. Children need to go through the grieving process, as well.”

“We also talk about suicide,” Lela adds. “We’ve had members of our parish die by suicide, so we feel that it’s an important topic to cover. We have several copies of the book *Bruised and Wounded: Struggling to Understand*

Suicide by Ronald Rolheiser. It’s a good reference for us to understand suicide, and if a family is affected, we give it to them to keep.”

Since everyone’s grief journey is different, Grief Support tries to meet everyone at their own pace, wherever they are in the grieving process.

“People can be grieving one day, and not the next,” Caren says. “It will return at a time when they least likely expect it — a smell or memory will pop up and the grieving process will start all over again. People come and go in our group. I think we find that when they’re feeling down, they need the group more, and they’ll come back for a bit.”

Through Grief Support, group members can carry out corporal works of mercy, which helps to strengthen both their own faith and that of others.

“I have grown through the process of doing this and facilitating the group,” Lela says. “I think it’s made me a better person, a more understanding person, and it has increased my faith. I think just listening and letting them get that grief out is a corporal work of mercy. You’re understanding them, and they are understanding their own grief so much better.

“We make sure they know that everyone grieves differently and that some of it will be short-term and some of it will be long-term,” she adds. “I always carry a book around that has a quote that says, ‘Gone from us, but leaving memories. Death can never take away memories, and that will always linger while upon this earth we stay.’”



The Grief Support Group began meeting in September 2013 at the request of Eileen Malone, following the passing of her husband.



Ministry facilitators Caren Winkels and Lela Platt are both registered nurses.

For more information about the Grief Support Ministry, please contact Mary at the parish office in Staples at 218-894-2296.



THE BLESSINGS

OF THE CATHOLIC MASS

It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion 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?

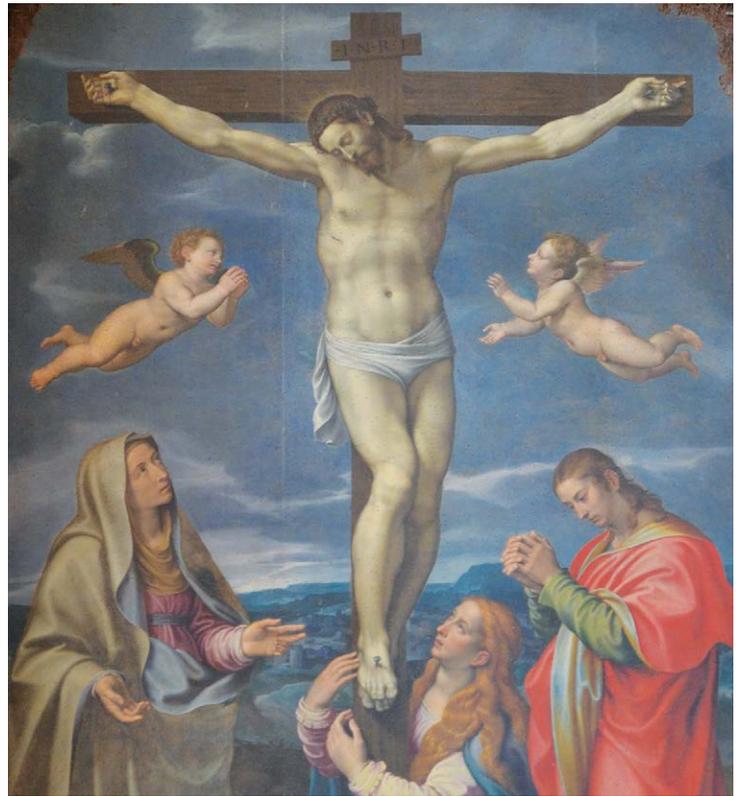
Believe it or not, the sacrifice of Calvary is really, truly happening at our parish, every time the Mass is offered.

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?

Mary's ACC Quilters:

Joyfully Creating, Serving and Giving to Those in Need

Although Mary's ACC Quilters officially began less than a year ago, the dedicated quilters have already made and donated about 150 handmade quilts. Ministry coordinators Dee Hendershot and Barb Thoennes gathered existing talent and organized the quilters, many of whom were already donating their handmade quilts.

"Quilters tend to be passionate and are always looking for more people to make quilts for," Dee says. "A quilting group was a natural way to connect people from all our churches."

The quilters chose three charities with which to work. Some of the women at St. Joseph Church, where Dee is a parishioner, had already donated quilts to Action for Children-Zambia, which inspired the formation of the quilters group, and they decided to keep working with them. They also chose to make quilts for Knute Nelson Hospice and the children at Pine Point School. Making quilts for children in Zambia, hospice residents, and schoolchildren gives the quilters room for creativity as they think about and pray for those who will receive the quilts.

"It's uplifting to be with women eager to create something useful for others," Dee says. "People pitch in wherever they are needed. It's exciting to see God's creativity working through everyone and knowing the quilts are appreciated."

The women sew the quilt tops at home using their own fabric and donated fabric they can pick up from St. Ann's quilter's room. They met in March, April, and May to finish the quilts with batting and backing and to tie them.

"After our March gathering, Barb and I realized we were getting a lot of work done, but we didn't want it to feel like a workhouse — we are never going to catch up on all the quilts the ladies were making!" Dee says. "So, in April, we started meeting at 9:45 a.m. to take time for about half an hour of coffee and social time."

The ladies also share a potluck lunch and take time to admire the finished quilts. Tying a quilt doesn't require sewing experience, and anyone can join to help. All it takes is a pair of scissors and the ability to tie double knots.

"We continue to get new people each time, especially when they realize that they don't need to know how to sew," Dee says.

Those who receive the quilts have a one-of-a-kind item. For some of the children in Zambia, their quilt is the only item they own. One patient in hospice received a quilt adorned with

cardinals, and the family was touched because cardinals were special to their family.

"We are called to serve and give," Dee says. "When you love to quilt, that's very easy to do. And hopefully, the quilts touch people's lives."



**"We are called to serve and give.
When you love to quilt, that's
very easy to do. And hopefully,
the quilts touch people's lives."**

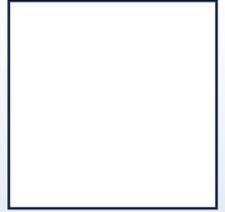
— Dee Hendershot

Mary's ACC Quilters meets at St. Ann's Parish Center on the third Monday of the month, from 9:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. beginning in September. To learn more, please contact Dee Hendershot at 218-640-7453 or dee_goerge@yahoo.com.



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C/O The Church of St Ann
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ACC WEEKEND MASS TIMES

Saturday:

4:30 p.m. Bluffton
5:00 p.m. Verndale
7:00 p.m. Bluegrass
7:30 p.m. Menahga

Sunday:

8:00 a.m. Bertha
8:30 a.m. Staples
10:00 a.m. Wadena
10:30 a.m. Motley

Introducing Our New Parish Stewardship Newsletter!

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help me and parish leaders better understand your thoughts about our Area Catholic Community. This survey will enable us to pave the way for our future.

As we strive to develop stewardship as a way of life in our Mary, Mother of the Church Area Catholic Community, the support and involvement of each parishioner is necessary to sustain the life of our Area Catholic Community. All of you have a place here, and all of you have a role to fill in the life of your parish as we live our lives as disciples of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit renew and refresh all of us as we work together to build our community and parish families through the use of our time, talent, and treasure.

In Christ,

Fr. Aaron Kuhn

Fr. Aaron

