



# MARY

## *Mother of the Church*

AREA CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

## Meet Parishioners Andrew and Ruth Freyholtz

### *A Family Faithfully Serving Together as Stewards*

**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

Andrew and Ruth Freyholtz have been parishioners of St. Joseph for 18 years, and have been married for 19 years. They were married on June 12, 2004, at St. Ann's in Wadena. They have been blessed with nine children, ages 8 months old to 18 years old. Over the years, they have been involved in many different aspects of parish life.

"We have both served on the Parish Council at different points," Ruth says. "We both taught Religious Ed. Andrew served on the ACC Pastoral Council and Cemetery Committee. Currently, Andrew is an EMHC, lector, involved in the Knights of Columbus, and helps with many youth events and trips. I am the Parish Life Committee Chair, I helped with VBS, and I am a member of Christian Mothers. We have also helped with, and received, the Mommy Meals Ministry in our parish."

For Andrew and Ruth, getting involved in parish life was easy. They feel that as members of a small parish, it is important to do what they can to help everything run smoothly.

"We all need community, and we feel having that community centered on Christ is a great opportunity for us to grow in our faith journey," Ruth says. "We also get to support others along the way."

Andrew financially supports their family. He works in engineering for BWIS and is the Director of Innovation for North America. Ruth is a homemaker and homeschools their children. As a family, they farm and also enjoy traveling, walking, hiking, biking, canoeing, and playing kickball.

"It is sometimes difficult to find a balance," Ruth says. "And there are times when we are more or less involved. We try to make time for things that are important.

There are so many good things we could be involved in. We try to remember that

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*Over the years, the members of the Freyholtz family have been involved in many different aspects of parish life.*



## Stewardship: *What to do With a Windfall?*

A businessman sells some property for a nice profit. A woman retires from a 20-year career at age 43. A high school student discovers he has an exceptional talent for playing the piano. What do they have in common?

Each person has recently received a windfall — an unusually large gain of money, time, or talent. Now each must answer a question — what to do with this newfound gain?

The businessman, already somewhat financially successful, finds that the profit from the sale of rental property is unexpectedly large. For the first time, he feels an urge not to save it, but to share it. The next Sunday, even though he already contributes to his parish, he puts a larger sum in the offertory basket. He also knows of a local charity that supports low-income mothers, and mails them a generous donation.

After her retirement from the Air Force, a woman finds she has a large amount of time during the day. Her husband works full-time and her two children are in high school. She hears a quiet voice asking, “How can you give back for all that you have received?” She calls her pastor and explains that she has the time to play a significant role in a parish ministry. He asks her to re-invigorate their newcomer’s ministry and visit each new family, to which she happily agrees.

In his high school music class, a 10th-grader discovers an amazing talent to play piano. After encouragement from family and friends, he joins the ensemble at the Sunday morning Mass. He even volunteers to play at special functions at the parish when needed.

In all three cases, the businessman, retiree and student have received something of value, and have made deliberate choices to share it with others, particularly within their parish.

Of course, it could have been different.

The businessman could have taken an especially extravagant vacation. The woman could have done any number of things with her free time (couldn’t we all?). The young pianist could have used his talent to form a band or make a recording. And the truth is that they can still do all those things. But having received such wonderful gifts, their gratitude compels them to share a portion of them. After all, what do they lose by sharing what was already a gift to them from God?

We’re all gifted and are called to share on a daily basis. But when the big blessings come, let’s pray for the grace to be even more generous than ever.



## A Letter From Our Pastor

# Renew Our Efforts as Good Stewards *to Give Out of Love*

Dear Parishioners,

If your calendar looks like mine, we all know everything is shifting back into high gear this month. Vacations are over. Schools are back in session. Clubs, organizations, and ministries are back at work full-time. Life is suddenly more hectic. As I looked at the calendar for September, I remembered some of the important feast days coming up this month and noticed several connections to living stewardship as a way of life.

First, let's consider the Feast Day of St. Teresa of Calcutta on Sept. 5. Small in stature, but so very Catholic in everything she represented and did, Mother Teresa was an important part of my perception of what it means to be Catholic and Christian. It is difficult to believe that she will have been gone for 26 years. She was the absolute epitome of what it means to be Catholic, to love, and to serve. She represented a living example of stewardship in our lifetimes. What she had to say about our lives and how we should live them became some of the more quotable illustrations of living stewardship that we reflect upon today. For example, she said, "It is not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving." That is our challenge as we begin the busy part of our year, to do everything we do with love.

Then, on Sept. 14, we celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The Cross has enormous meaning to us as Catholics. How many times do we make the Sign of the Cross to signify the Holy Trinity and to remember that the Cross represents so much to us? It is a renewal of our Baptism every time we make the Sign of the Cross. More than 1,700 years ago, St. Helen discovered the true cross in Jerusalem. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was built on that spot, and it was dedicated in September 335, thus our veneration of the Cross on Sept. 14.



When we make the Sign of the Cross, we are also indicating our discipleship, our pledge to be good stewards. Whether it is in our labors that we glorify God, in serving the Lord and others with love, or constantly reminding ourselves of Christ's salvation of us on the Cross, we need to continually rededicate ourselves to service and stewardship. This month — when we revive so much in our parish — is a good time to do that. St. Teresa of Calcutta also said, "The needs are great, and none of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful."

In Christ,

*Fr. Aaron Kuhn*

Fr. Aaron







# An Update on Construction

## *Three Major ACC Projects*



Keeping up with facilities and property maintenance for all eight of our churches is a full-time job. There are consistent little projects being done within our Mary, Mother of the Church Area Catholic Community (ACC).

Deacon Randy Altstadt, Business Administrator of our ACC, is responsible for overseeing many of these projects and is proud of the work that has been accomplished in many of our churches.

Currently, the three largest projects include a sacristy remodel, a sanctuary elevation, and an addition of a narthex.

“St. Ann in Wadena was recently remodeled and is beautiful except for the sacristy,” Deacon Altstadt says. “We are in the midst of changing that and are ready to make the sacristy a sacred place that is better organized.”

The sacristy is the place in which the clergy and altar servers get ready for Mass, as well as where the holy vessels and vestments are stored.

“It is important for the sacristy to be organized because it is where we prepare for Mass,” Deacon Altstadt says.

Amid the physical preparations for Mass, like getting the vessels set, the sacristy is where the priest and altar servers say prayers to prepare themselves spiritually for the Holy Sacrifice.

The hope is to have the sacristy remodeled as soon as the cabinetry is ready.



*Renderings from the architectural drawings for the addition of a narthex to St. Michael's Church.*

# tion in Our Community

## *ts Currently in the Works*

Additionally, St. John the Baptist in Bluffton has been anticipating renovations for quite some time. The initial project was to install new carpeting throughout the church, but now there are additional plans to make the sanctuary more suitable for the liturgy.

“Knowing that when we change the carpet in the space, we won’t have the opportunity to make any other changes in the space for many years, Fr. Aaron wants to get it right the first time and make necessary changes to transform the sanctuary into a proper place of worship,” Deacon Altstadt says.

The plan is to make the sanctuary a place of beauty and reverence for the Mass as well as having it liturgically correct in its construction before the installation of the carpeting.

This project is still in the early stages as Fr. Aaron works with the diocesan Director of Liturgy to get plans approved.

Finally, the largest project taking place in our ACC is happening at St. Michael in Motley.

“After researching the needs of the parish, it was

determined that there needs to be a larger gathering space and increased accessibility for those who are physically handicapped,” Deacon Altstadt says.

To address these needs, a new narthex will be added to the entrance of the church building. This will serve as a gathering space for funerals and weddings. It will also be a great space for people to congregate before and after Mass.

“The architectural drawings have been finalized and we recently hired Becker Construction Inc. to do the job,” Deacon Altstadt says. “The project is scheduled to start on Sept. 5, 2023, and is to be completed six months later, provided there are no construction delays. In addition, we will be installing a chair lift that will make the whole church handicapped accessible.”

These major projects have been in the works for a long time and it is exciting to report that there is progress being made for each. There is no doubt that the impact of these projects will be very positive for our ACC!

## Parishioners Andrew and Ruth Freyholtz *continued from front cover*

there are different seasons of life and different areas we can help with at different times.”

It is important to Andrew and Ruth that their children know the importance of community. They want their children to understand that it is important for them to help their community and the parish. So, whenever they serve, Andrew and Ruth typically include their children if possible. In addition, three of their boys — Johnathan, David, and Caleb — are altar servers.

As parents to nine children, Andrew and Ruth understand that they are called to live out stewardship within their parish, in addition to their home. They have been blessed by their children, and strive to share that call to stewardship and community with their kids.

“Being open to life has been a huge part of our marriage and God has blessed us greatly,” Ruth says. “Our children are

our greatest treasure. We feel so blessed to get the opportunity to lead them to Christ. God lets us take part in the creation of life. What bigger honor is there, than to create a soul that will last for all of eternity?”

**“We all need community, and we feel having that community centered on Christ is a great opportunity for us to grow in our faith journey. We also get to support others along the way.”**

*— Ruth Freyholtz*



# *Why We Do What We Do at Mass*

## A Look at the Postures and Gestures During the Central Act of Catholic Worship

**T**he Catholic liturgy includes many different gestures, postures, and symbols. As a Catholic, you are likely familiar with these practices, which include sitting, standing, and kneeling during Mass. But these gestures all have specific meanings and are designed to help us pray with all of our being: not only mind and soul, but body as well. To better understand the meaning behind these physical movements, we need to keep in mind two important aspects of the Catholic Mass — that the priest acts in the person of Christ, and that Jesus is present in the Eucharist.

Standing and speaking in the place of Jesus, the celebrating

priest leads us with the gestures, traditions, and rituals that are part of the Order of the Mass, and we respond to these with our own actions and words. In this way, the Mass is much like a conversation and shared meal with Christ Himself.

Secondly, Jesus is fully present in the consecrated Eucharist, in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. This is the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which states that the bread and wine literally become Jesus during the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass.

So, why do we assume each specific posture and make different gestures during the Mass, and what do they signify?

### **Why We Sit During the Mass**

After the Introductory Rite at each Mass, we sit for the Liturgy of the Word. As we listen to the readings from the lectionary, sitting indicates our willingness to be students at the feet of Jesus. We also sit down for the Homily, as we pay close attention and take in what is being preached. We are seated again while the Eucharistic elements are being prepared: a gesture of anticipation, as we prepare ourselves for and eagerly await the climax of the Mass in the Eucharistic Prayer.

### **Why We Stand During the Mass**

At the very beginning of the Mass, we stand for the Introductory Rite, which includes the Penitential Act. Here we acclaim the *Kyrie Eleison*, meaning “Lord, have mercy” in Greek. The *Kyrie* is an ancient Christian prayer in which we confess our sins to both our Almighty Father and our fellow Christians. Standing during the Penitential Act shows that we are owning up to our sinfulness and openly asking for the Lord’s mercy.

Standing is also a simple but profound way of honoring and respecting Jesus during the Mass, both in the person of the priest and in the scriptures, especially the Gospel. While we sit for the first and second readings, we stand for the Gospel reading. The Gospel is the pinnacle of the Word of God and to hear it proclaimed aloud is a great honor, which is why we rise from our seats and proclaim “Alleluia” as it is opened. Just before the reading of the Gospel, we make a small sign of the cross with our thumb over our foreheads, lips, and hearts. This simple act is a symbolic request for God to impress His Word upon our minds, lips, and hearts. When the priest or deacon has finished reading the Gospel, he shows respect to the Word of God by kissing the Gospel. After the homily, we stand back up to pray the Nicene Creed as a Profession of Faith, once again standing firm in our ownership of our faith.

### **Why We Kneel During the Mass**

Kneeling is the most humble posture of worship during the Mass. When we kneel, we completely surrender

ourselves to our Heavenly Father. We kneel during several parts of the Mass. After the Holy, Holy, Holy, we spend almost the rest of the Mass on our knees — an incredible act of faith and devotion by which we acknowledge that Jesus is personally present among us.

As we kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest’s many gestures are also precise and meaningful. He makes the Sign of the Cross over the bread and wine and proclaims Christ’s own words: “This is my Body,” and “This is my Blood”. As the bread and wine are consecrated, the priest kneels several times in front of the Blessed Sacrament to express reverence. Before or while receiving the Eucharist, it is traditional to kneel, bow, or genuflect to express your humility before God.

The Mass is rich with meaning — every element and gesture represents something profound and beautiful. When we understand them and take them to heart, each moment we spend at Mass will become more transformative and nourishing to our souls.





*Confirmation, 2023*

## Celebrating Confirmation: *An Important Step in Our Young Adults' Faith Journeys*

“Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit” — these are the words the celebrant says at Confirmation while signing the confirmand’s head with chrism, an oil also used at Baptism. Confirmation is one of three Sacraments of Initiation. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist “lay the foundations of every Christian life” (1212).

Confirmation will be celebrated at Sacred Heart on Sept. 24 for all eight parishes. Most of the students receiving the sacrament are in their junior and senior years of high school. They began preparing in the spring of 2023. Since then, the candidates have been working on completing their requirements — three service projects, an interview with one of our priests, praying about who to ask to be their sponsor, and which patron saint to choose. In July, they attended an all-day retreat, and regular classes began in August.

“My hope is that each candidate will say ‘yes’ to receiving the Holy Spirit on Sept. 24 because they understand the sacrament and have encountered the Lord in prayer and each other,” says Molly Laxen, ACC Discipleship Director and coordinator for the ACC’s Confirmation program.

**“Receiving the Holy Spirit in Confirmation is when we turn the flashlight on so that He can show us the way and maybe save us a few missteps in our journey to heaven.”**

— *Molly Laxen, ACC Discipleship Director*

Molly wants the students to develop fellowship with others so they have a solid community in the faith, as well as to be formed spiritually and intellectually. She also asks parents to support their confirmands as they prepare for this important sacrament. Most importantly, they should be praying for their child even more often.

“They should model with their own lives the importance of the sacraments by attending Mass weekly with their families and making Reconciliation a routine,” Molly says. “Parents can help by asking the question: What can I do to help?”

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**MARY**  
*Mother of the Church*  
—  
AREA CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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**Saturday:**

4:00 p.m. - St. John the Baptist, Bluffton

4:00 p.m. - St. Hubert, Bluegrass

6:00 p.m. - St. Frederick, Verndale

6:30 p.m. - Assumption of Our Lady, Menahga

**Sunday:**

8:00 a.m. - St. Joseph, Bertha

8:30 a.m. - Sacred Heart, Staples

10:00 a.m. - St. Ann, Wadena *\*livestream*

10:30 a.m. - St. Michael, Motley

## Celebrating Confirmation *continued from page 7*

Our whole faith community should pray for the confirmands as they prepare to receive the sacrament.

While Confirmation is often mistakenly regarded as the “end” of formation for teens, this is certainly not the case. Molly hopes to see more interest at all the parishes for weekly formation after Confirmation.

In the end, Molly hopes to equip all confirmands to spread the Word of God — even if it’s just among family and friends.

“All we have to do to be His witnesses is say ‘yes’ and pray for the Holy Spirit to be our strength, words, patience, and wisdom,” she says. “He is waiting for us. It is important for our teens to receive this sacrament because the Lord Himself

is calling them to it at this time and this place — let us all pray they say, ‘Yes Lord, I will be Your witness even to the ends of the earth.’”

Molly uses an analogy for the Sacrament of Confirmation — without it, it’s like searching for a blue M&M in a pile of red ones in the dark without a flashlight.

“Eventually, or even by blind luck, you might find the blue M&M, but if a flashlight is available to you, it would help,” she says. “Receiving the Holy Spirit in Confirmation is when we turn the flashlight on so that He can show us the way and maybe save us a few missteps in our journey to heaven.”

Congratulations to all our confirmands as they receive this special sacrament later this month!

**For more information on 2024 Confirmation preparations as it becomes available, contact Molly Laxen at 218-632-7319 or [mlaxen@marysacc.org](mailto:mlaxen@marysacc.org).**