

Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

FUNERAL LUNCHEON MINISTRY

PROVIDING COMFORT DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

When a loved one passes, one of the hardest things about losing them can be preparing to let them go. A funeral is meant to provide spiritual solace for family and friends, but the moments afterwards are a chance to care for the social and emotional side.

More than just a chance to eat after a long morning, the funeral luncheon allows family members a time to catch up with one another, spend time with friends that have come to comfort them, and take a few moments just to grieve together.

“It’s a very healing thing,” says Funeral Luncheon Ministry group coordinator Mary Stewart. “You get to visit and maybe laugh with people that you’ve known and haven’t seen for a long time.”

Mary’s team of volunteers is one of four groups in the Funeral Luncheon Ministry who make sure families don’t have to worry about feeding mourners when a loved one’s funeral is held at Spirit of Life. After receiving a call from the parish office to let her know a funeral is about to take place, Mary readies other volunteers to serve food and drinks and welcome those who have come to remember their friend or family member.

A typical funeral lunch usually consists of sandwiches, hot side dishes, a salad and dessert.



“The church itself furnishes a ham and buns at no cost to the family, and the rest of the foods are all donated by other parishioners,” she explains. “There’s no charge to any of the family for the dinner.”

Once the luncheon has ended, families can take leftover items home or choose to leave the

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Hospitality: THE CORNERSTONE OF STEWARDSHIP

The dictionary defines “hospitality” as “the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way.”

A Christian worldview can refer to hospitality as “Christian kindness.”

We see the effects of hospitality – or the lack thereof – time and time again throughout the Bible. Christ speaks of hospitality in Matthew’s Gospel when He says, “When I was a stranger, you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). The Old Testament told of the Israelites, as they wandered the desert for 40 years in search of hospitable environs. Even the Holy Family spent ample time searching for shelter before the birth of Our Lord.

It is safe to say that hospitality is, and most likely has always been, of great importance to people everywhere. Modern hotels and hostels often use the image of a pineapple to advertise their special brand of hospitality. There is no doubt that in ancient times, the distant lights of an inn or tavern struck a chord of hope within weary travelers’ hearts.

Indeed, hospitality’s meaning has not diminished at all over the years, decades and millennia.

Christians view the presence of hospitality as meaning the difference between calling others “guests” and “strangers.” Guests are welcomed with open arms and warm smiles, but strangers aren’t. Guests feel the genuine love present in a hearty

welcome, but strangers don’t. Guests often return for second or third visits, while strangers don’t.

As a parish, do we find ourselves surrounded by guests, or burdened by strangers?

Hospitality is, in many respects, a mindset. The same person may be treated as guest at the church just down the road, but as a stranger here.

Matthew’s Gospel tells of Christ as He reveals a profound truth about hospitality: “When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.” That is, “I used to be a stranger, but you fixed that when you welcomed me.” It’s a classic example of before-and-after. All it took was a change of heart.

Stewardship holds hospitality as an immensely important concept. Remember the “three Ts” of stewardship – Time, Talent, and Treasure? Well, there are also “four Ps,” the Four Pillars of Stewardship – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. Hospitality is mentioned first. Why? If not for hospitality, none of the other pillars will ever take hold. Hospitality is the cornerstone of stewardship, because it opens the door to a person’s heart and allows them to receive joy, grace, and love.

Hospitality must become second nature, if stewardship is to truly take hold within a parish. So, when a stranger visits our parish, welcome them as a guest. Perhaps one day, they’ll pay us a second visit.

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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

PREPARING FOR OUR LENTEN JOURNEY AND PRIORITIZING THE GIFT OF TIME

Dear Parishioners,

Lent begins on Wednesday, Feb. 14, Ash Wednesday. Most of us are aware that Lent is a time of prayer, penance and giving alms. So, it would seem that Lent is a perfect time for stewardship. As we examine our lives and try to find ways to deepen our relationship with God, it is good to remember that whenever we give our time, talent, or treasure, we are living as better stewards.

For each of us, our relationship with God should be the first priority. God has given us the precious gift of time, so we need to thank Him for this gift by using it wisely. Stewardship of time is about how we spend every minute of every day. Most of us probably feel that we do not have enough time for all the things we hope to accomplish or achieve. However, each of us is given the same amount of time — 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week. So, how do we choose to use our time? We need to prioritize this gift of time, which means putting the most important things first.

If deepening our relationship with God is our first priority, then time spent in prayer, at Mass, in our personal lives through reading Holy Scriptures, and meditating on God's Holy Word should be paramount. Our second priority might be our relationship to our family. We need to spend time building a strong family unit filled with respect and love for life. And perhaps our third priority should be our relationship with our parish and our community of faith. Finally, we must spend time supporting others in their faith journeys and ministering to those in need.

We must remember that first requirement for our Lenten journey — prayer. Our Catholic faith is full of prayer forms and traditions that are available to us all. Find a prayer form that works for you, and truly cultivate your prayer life in order to connect and



build a real, personal relationship with the Lord. We all need to carve out time during Lent by dedicating time to prayer. Perhaps it is only 10 minutes each day for quiet reflection on Holy Scripture. Or it may be something more substantial — perhaps a reflective weekend retreat.

We might consider Lent our own personal Stewardship Renewal season. Fasting, prayer and almsgiving should be what we try to do the entire year. But we must make an intentional effort to

practice these during the 40 days of Lent. After all, 40 days comprises just over 10 percent of the year — and that is remarkably close to our stewardship tithe of 10 percent, isn't it?

God bless you in all you do, and especially during this holy time of Lent.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Msgr. Chad Gion". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Msgr. Chad Gion,
Pastor

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ANSWERING THE CALL TO SERVE THE POOR.

PARISH



Kathy Snider (right) and her beloved mother, Joell Snider (deceased), in Antigua, Guatemala.



One of the little ones that Kathy is blessed to serve through her ministry work in Guatemala.

Spirit of Life parishioner Kathy Snider first heard God’s call to serve the poor as a young adult. It all began at the young age of 21, during a Catholic Charismatic Renewal retreat where Kathy experienced God in a truly life-changing way. Though Kathy had previously been baptized and raised in the Catholic faith, at this point in time she was largely estranged from the Church. Like so many young people, she had gotten swept up in the process of “living,” busily pursuing her career as a veterinary technician in Washington state. This all changed, however, following her retreat experience which inspired Kathy to commit her life fully to Jesus Christ for the first time.

“At that retreat, I decided to turn my life completely over to God,” Kathy says. “Subsequently, I returned to the Church and began to seriously question my life’s work. Shortly thereafter, through prayer I heard a voice within saying, ‘Serve the poor.’ And so that’s what I began to do.”

Burning with her newfound calling, Kathy started out her missionary work in Mexico, first serving residents of Ciudad Juarez and then later General Cepeda, a small town in northern Mexico. But Kathy was eventually led to take a hiatus from her missionary endeavors, returning home here to North Dakota where she worked as Spirit of Life’s Director of Children’s Ministry for seven years. During this time, Kathy also earned a degree at the University of Mary in Christian Ministry. Yet, blessed as her work among us was, Kathy couldn’t ignore the “deep yearning” inside to return to foreign mission. And so, through a series of events and opportunities, Kathy began doing missionary work once again in Santiago, *Ixcán*, a remote village in the *Ixcán* jungle of Guatemala.

“I prayed, lived with the people and made friends — I sweated in the balmy heat, hiked in the mud, and got malaria twice,” Kathy says. “It was the people who truly carried me through the long process of adapting to this new culture, as well as the challenges of learning a new language. I learned, too, that God’s grace was in the call. So I stayed, prayed some more and listened. And out of that prayerful listening, *Ixcán* Ministries, a non-profit, faith-based organization, was formed.”

PIONER PROFILE: **KATHY SNIDER**



Now, nearly 20 years later, Ixcán Ministries has been able to help the people of Ixcán spiritually, emotionally and materially in a wide variety of ways. They helped obtain a grant for a new church building, provide numerous faith formation opportunities, offer a number of support and recovery groups, provide food, clothing, housing and medical treatment for those in need, and have assisted in building school and educational programs. And throughout it all, Kathy says, her Spirit of Life community has been there supporting her, helping from afar to serve God's poor.

"Spirit of Life remains a spiritual home to me and my Catholic faith community when I am in the Bismarck-Mandan area," Kathy says. "Over the years, the parish has supported my ministry in many different ways, from helping to raise funds in the early years and purchasing my mule, Gitana, to raising awareness of the mission to parishioners who in turn have supported the ministry financially. The parish has also greatly promoted sales for our women's products through Ixcán Creations, which empowers women weavers and jewelers. Though my involvement in the parish is often limited due to my transitory stays in

the area, when I'm in Mandan, I do my best to participate in Mass, Holy Hours and, at times, visit the sick in the hospital. This involvement helps me feel connected to and maintain relationships within this special faith community."

Kathy feels truly blessed to be able to serve God through her missionary endeavors, viewing it as her own personal manner of embracing stewardship. It has stretched her in ways she never imagined and continues to form her into the woman God created her to be. She is also deeply grateful for her Spirit of Life family, whose prayers and support continue to strengthen her during the hard moments and to enable her to carry out this special work.

"Everything I have and am is truly a gift from God," Kathy says. "Thus I am called to be a good steward of those gifts and to use my talents, time, and resources to the best of my ability according to God's will. Mission in Guatemala has been the way that God has called me personally to give of myself by serving the people there. Over the years, I have been healed, stretched and formed by the people of Santiago Ixcán, who in turn are God's greatest gift to me."

SACRAMENT SERIES: *Reconciliation*...

EXPERIENCING THE HEALING POWER OF GOD

At age 30, Administrative Assistant/Communications Director Kara Haff experienced a powerful awakening during the Sacrament of Confession, and her spiritual life has never been the same since.

“I am a convert from the Lutheran church, so it was the first time I ever went to Confession,” Kara says. “Leading up to that moment, I was a bundle of nerves. There were a lot of years to cover, childhood, college, early adulthood — oh my! After saying, ‘These are my sins,’ I confessed the mortal sins I had written down, and then the Holy Spirit began to work inside me, urging me to cleanse myself of my venial sins as well. I laid everything out to the priest that day.”



In the end, Kara was deeply touched by Christ’s mercy.

“When I finished, nearly an hour later, I was shaking, asking myself why I didn’t choose to use the screen in the confessional,” Kara says. “I was embarrassed about some of the things I needed to say and nervous to look the priest in the eyes. When I recollected myself and looked up at him, all I could see was grace. He clarified a few items with me and gave me my penance. Once he gave me absolution, a huge weight was lifted from my soul. It was an incredible feeling. I was overwhelmed with joy!”

Amazingly, Kara’s journey to Confession began with an even more profound journey — discovering the truth of Catholicism.

“Although I was baptized Lutheran, I only really started to embrace my faith in my 20s,” she says. “I was attending a Lutheran church, reading the Word of the Lord and participating in the choir. As we began our married life together, I felt an overwhelming call to the Catholic faith. I began the RCIA process in the fall of 2011. I learned so much about faith during that time.”

Being a convert, Kara is overwhelmingly grateful for the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and sees it in a refreshing light.

“Reconciliation is an incredibly powerful sacrament, renewing my soul, bringing it back to the state it was in at the time of Baptism,” she says. “My slate is clean and soul is at peace, like a little taste of the happiness of heaven. Confession leaves me with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment to doing God’s Will.”

And, importantly, the gift of Confession draws us nearer to our goal of walking in the footsteps of Christ.

“Going to Confession has brought me closer to Jesus,” Kara says. “How beautiful it would be if we could all be as humble, generous, patient

THROUGH THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

and loving as Jesus. Frequently attending the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps to make us more like Christ. As I have grown in holiness, I find I have a stronger sense of sin and the need for Reconciliation. When we hear we are forgiven from the priest in Confession, we can feel peace and joy again, because we are again in a good relationship with God.”

To someone who may be hesitant to go to Confession, Kara has some helpful tips.

“Jesus is waiting to forgive you!” she says. “Prepare yourself by using an examination of conscience booklet. Take an inventory of yourself, determine your mortal and venial sins. Be humble and truthful with God and yourself. Only a priest has the authority to forgive our sins and he can only forgive what he is aware of. Find a priest you are comfortable with — you don’t need to confess to the priest in your home church.”

By taking advantage of the blessing of this sacrament frequently, one can truly flourish in their friendship with the Heavenly Father.

“Don’t wait for sin to build up to go to Confession,” Kara says. “The longer you wait between confessions, the more likely you are to miss something of grave importance. The more often you go to confession, the easier it becomes and the more conscious you become of your thoughts and actions.”

Confession is offered at our parish 20 minutes prior to daily Mass, from 7 to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday afternoons, and on Sundays from 8 to 8:30 a.m. People may also contact the parish office to schedule an appointment to go to Confession.



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Phone: 701-663-1660 | myspiritoflife.com

Change Service Requested

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Spirit of Life

Monday: 8 a.m.

Tuesday - Thursday: 7 a.m., 9 a.m.

Friday: 7 a.m., 9 a.m.,

Saturday: 9 a.m., 5 p.m.

Sunday: 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m.

CONFESSIONS: Sunday: 8-8:30 a.m.

Saturday: 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Wednesday: 7-8:30 p.m., and 20 min. before
weekday Masses except Mondays

St. Martin's Parish

Even Months: 9 a.m.

Odd Months: 11 a.m.

St. Anthony's Parish

Even Months: 11 a.m.

Odd Months: 9 a.m.

FUNERAL LUNCHEON MINISTRY *continued from front cover*

food at Spirit of Life to be donated to area needy. Mary says her team usually feeds about 75 people, but has fed as many as 250 in the past.

"I think it's one of the most helpful things we do in our parish for the community," Mary says. "People have so many relatives there from out of town, so they can take sandwiches and salads home if they're left and then they don't have to worry about feeding their guests. It's a very thankful feeling when you can help a family, especially at that time in their life."

Volunteers are always welcome to help with the Funeral Luncheon Ministry. Teams rotate their duties once every six weeks and each team is responsible for helping with any funeral that falls during their two-week period. Those who wish to lend their time should be available to help during the day.

You can express your interest in the Funeral Luncheon Ministry by calling the parish office at 701-663-1660.

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