

Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

BAPTISM: BEGINNING THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

Setting up the nursery. Installing the car seat. Stocking up on diapers. The to-do list as you prepare for a new baby can be both exciting and exhausting. Sometimes, in the midst of washing tiny clothes, writing baby shower thank-you notes and choosing a name, it can be easy to forget the most important thing that you, as a Catholic parent, will do for your child.

“Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life,” the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us (1213). In other words, the Sacrament of Baptism is the foundation of a life of faith.

The Church has always taught the necessity of Baptism for salvation — that is, welcome into heaven. It is the call and duty of Catholic parents to make every effort to aid their children in experiencing a relationship with Christ here on earth, and also, for eternity in heaven. Baptism is the first step in this journey.

While the Sacrament of Baptism can be received in a number of different situations, including older children and adults, the most common form of Baptism, in the Catholic Church, takes place when a child is an infant.

Nate and Becca Swenson are parishioners who welcomed their fifth child, John, last May. Because he arrived 10 weeks early, Msgr. Chad Gion came to the NICU to baptize John, the day he was born.

“We believe that Baptism changes who we are,”



Msgr. Chad Gion came to the NICU to baptize John, the day he was born.

Nate says. “It’s a big deal — not only is it entering the Church, entering the faith, but also becoming a child of God and Jesus now lives in you.

“It’s a grace that we didn’t want to hold back from our kids any longer than we had to,” he adds.

Beginning at their Baptisms and as they’ve grown older, the Swensons hope to impress upon their children the meaning of this sacrament and grace available to them through it.

continued on page 5

STEWARDSHIP BECOMING FISHERS OF MEN



Whether you hold a high-profile position, such as parish council president, or have more of a behind-the-scenes role as a coordinator of a parish ministry, God has called you – as a parish leader – to help build His Church.

This challenge is just as important as the call of any other Catholic leader, including the earliest disciples.

When Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee, He urged a group of fishermen, “Come follow me.” Jesus promised if they laid down their nets and followed Him, He would make them fishers of men. These men were among His original disciples, and they knew Christ’s call was so important that they left their secular occupation to follow Him.

Just as He did with the fishermen, Jesus calls each of us today. He is not necessarily asking us to leave our secular careers, but He *is* asking us to put Him first in our lives and to share His message of love with others.

God truly wants us to serve Him and to build His Church through the secular occupations we have chosen. It is through the Church that new disciples are born, and it is in the Church that

disciples continue to mature. Forming disciples of Christ is the most important work that can be done on earth, and each of us has been called to play an active role in this work.

So, how do we go about building the Church? Where do we find the plans?

Some people mistakenly think that building the Church – in particular, building our own parish or diocese – is no different than building a successful business. Indeed, the purpose of building the Church is to change hearts – a goal that only God can accomplish.

Secular society has not prepared us for this work. However, the Holy Spirit – sometimes referred to as the “Architect of the Church” – has the plan. In order to implement this plan, we must become good listeners. We must open ourselves to the workings of the Holy Spirit as He transforms us and guides us to carry out God’s work and to serve as His instruments on earth, building the Church together with Him.

This is where spiritual exercises, such as retreats, come into play. A retreat offers the individual an opportunity to spend time alone with the Lord, allowing God to draw the person deeper into the mystery of who He is, who we are and what He is doing in our lives. Stewardship retreats can offer parish leaders the opportunity each year to spend time with the Lord as He directs them in the ways of discipleship. As leaders, we must take time to meditate on the Scriptures and allow Jesus to open up His Word to us. Then, as we grow deeper in our understanding of what God wants of us, we can exclaim, just as the first disciples did on the road to Emmaus, “Our hearts are burning within us” (Lk 24:32).

God has placed an extremely important call on the lives of all parish leaders, no matter how big or small the role. It is vital to understand how we, as parish leaders, can best answer His call. What, in particular, is the Lord calling each one of us to do? He most likely is not asking us to drop our nets, but to pick them up and become “fishers of men.” We must discern how we can most effectively cast our nets for Him.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

RESOLVE TO GIVE BACK TO GOD IN 2018

Dear Parishioners,

Another new year — 2018! There was a time in my life when this date (and others) seemed so far in the future. It is amazing how those dates start to pile up and stream by, isn't it? I have reached a point where measuring one's life by the years and dates is not as significant as many other things.

I recall reading somewhere, "The world around us asks, 'What does a person own?' But God asks, 'How does a person use what he or she has been given?'" This month of January is one filled with reminders of holiness — the official end of the Christmas season; the Epiphany of our Lord; the Baptism of the Lord; and the return to Ordinary Time, which, as we know, is not "ordinary" at all.

At Epiphany we hear, "Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts" (Matthew 2:11), a reference to the Magi and their visit to the Christ Child. The image of the Magi kneeling before the infant Jesus and opening their gifts for Him is one we should all try to follow. Each of us is called to open our gifts before Jesus and offer Him what He needs. I heard a suggestion once that if you have a problem with this thought, you should perhaps keep one of the Magi from your Christmas Nativity set and place it on your desk as a reminder.

During the Baptism of the Lord, God makes it clear when He proclaims from the Heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased"



(Mark 1:11). God has given us the greatest gift He could give. He gave His only Son. When we think about the enormity of that gift of Jesus sent to save us, in addition to all the other blessings which God has entrusted to us, it is very humbling. God has given us so much. What do we give in return?

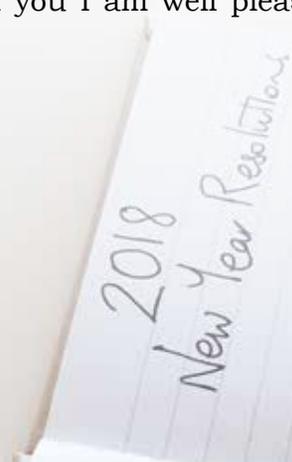
Making resolutions is common at this time of year. We will also hear this month about how Jesus called the first apostles. The Lord calls us as well to follow Him. Let us resolve to try to do that better — all of us. That does not mean we have to leave our work and our families behind, but we do need to put our service to Jesus. That should be our top resolution.

In *The Theology of the Hammer*, Habitat for Humanity co-founder Millard Fuller wrote, "The only truly safe investment one can make in life is what is given away." First and foremost, God wants us. That should be our real resolution — to give ourselves to the Lord. May we all do a better job of that in 2018. God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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

Msgr. Chad Gion,
Pastor



MUSIC DEEPENS THE LITURGY, I

Are you one of those parishioners at Mass who doesn't take part in singing part of the liturgy? Are you convinced you have no singing talent at all, so you just keep quiet?

Well, Dominick Goettle, Director of Music and Liturgy, wants you to join in the singing anyway!

"Singing is just speaking at a sustained pitch," he says. "American culture is unique in that we have this hesitancy to engage in singing. In other cultures, everyone does, and there is no fear to be involved in it. But here, we have this hesitation, so people say, 'I can't sing.'"

Dominick is not asking you to break out into full song during Mass. But he does believe that you are able to take part in the shorter sung responses.

"If you can talk, you're making a pitch, and you can sing," he says. "Maybe not elaborate music, and maybe you're not reading notes, but you can sing maybe just simple dialogue, the back and forth. When you go back to childhood and you teased someone, you went 'na, na, na,' and it's singing, and it's something we're all able to do."

Dominick would like us to sing during Mass for several reasons.

"Music is intrinsically unifying in itself," he says. "So in communal prayer, the liturgy, we're in communication with God. Music expresses unity of the people of God. When the congregation sings together, sings the same words, the same melody, music expresses the unity the liturgy is trying to affect in the community. So, it also affects that unity. It helps the community of people to be transformed and to be united."

Another reason for our singing during Mass goes even deeper.

"Music is also intrinsically transformative in a number of ways," Dominick says. "It's transformative in the way it lifts hearts and minds to something outside oneself. It is transformative in the way that those who participate in music with the liturgy — the most important parts of the sung liturgy are the dialogues



Dominick Goettle, Director of Music and Liturgy, encourages us to sing during the liturgy, as our singing helps bring us together in community.

between the priest and people. The little phrases — 'Lord be with you,' 'Lift up your hearts,' the penitential act — these little dialogue phrases are so important to be sung. At these parts in the liturgy, we're meant to take these words into ourselves. When we sing 'Lord have mercy,' it's not just we're singing, but singing

Anyone interested in taking part in music during the liturgy may call Dominick Goettle at his office at 701-663-1660.

REFLECTS THE MAJESTY OF GOD

them helps ingrain them in us and to transform the way we think. Singing then is a more effective way of making them a part of us, than just reciting them.”

The simple act of singing in the liturgy also takes the liturgy to a separate place for us — a sacred place.

“Music has the property of drawing one’s hearts and minds to something outside,” Dominick says. “It elevates the whole experience of the liturgy to something different. In the liturgy, we set it apart from our daily lives — it’s sacred. By singing the liturgy, that makes it elevated, higher than our normal daily interactions.”

Music, obviously plays a major part in Dominick’s life. He started college as a theology major — but

during the second semester, he picked up music.

“Since then, making music has been part of my daily life,” he says. “My life is all about music. It’s the central thing to my life. It helped me to be in tune with God.”

By practicing music each day, Dominick finds that he is led to think about beautiful things and contemplate beautiful things.

“I think music really gives me a huge appreciation for the majesty of God, the power of God,” he says.

As for other ways we can participate in music in our parish, Dominick will be looking for cantors to serve at Mass. There also are opportunities to take part in the Easter Choir and the Christmas Choir.

BAPTISM: BEGINNING THE JOURNEY OF FAITH

continued from front cover

“I ask them, do you remember how Jesus was the Light of the World, at Christmas?” says Becca, who also serves as a catechist with Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. “Then, before Easter we thought the Light went out, but then we realized He rose from the dead and the Light’s never going to be put out! I explain, that’s the Light you received at Baptism, that’s the light that can never be put out. That’s Jesus’ life within you.”

For the Swensons, their children’s Baptisms have also been an opportunity for them to renew their own faith.

“At a Baptism, [the priest] is asking me, ‘Do you believe this?’ and I’m responding, ‘Yes,’” Becca says. “And he’s telling me I’m renewing my own promises, or the promises made by my parents, when I was Baptized.”

“We make that commitment to our children that we’re going to raise them in the faith and teach them

the faith,” Nate adds. “To publicly acknowledge that, it can be a reminder that I have the responsibility — not just for myself, to know my faith, but also for my children, to pass on our faith.”

Nate shares that he finds himself particularly moved when focusing on the idea of presenting his children back to God, at their Baptisms.

“As a parent, it’s hard to let go of your kids, and Baptism is like this conscious, ‘All right God, this is Your child, not mine — please lead them to You, please take care of them, please watch over them, because I can’t be everything to them,’” he says.

The Swensons encourage other parents who may be considering having their children Baptized.

“Baptism is such a foundational thing,” Nate says. “If children are going to be Christian at all in their life, this is where it starts for everyone.”

“This is a good thing,” Becca adds, with a smile. “It might springboard you into your faith!”

For more information on the Sacrament of Baptism, or to begin the Baptism preparation process for your child, or to receive the Sacrament of Baptism yourself, please contact the parish office at 701-663-1660.

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!

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.

THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE

MAROHL FAMILY JOYFULLY SERVES CHRIST AND CHURCH

St. Anthony parishioners Jonathan and Michelle Marohl are at the helm of what is most certainly a very busy and active family. As parents to four children ages 8-16, they still somehow manage to be involved in seemingly every aspect of parish life. And this is all done with an overall spirit of joyfulness, reflecting one of the couple's favorite verses: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad" (Psalm 118:24).

Mindful that each new day — with all its blessings and opportunities — comes from God alone, the Marohls have truly striven to embrace stewardship as a way of life within their family, to consistently model it to their children and live out their discipleship calling.

"I look at stewardship as a way of life," Michelle says. "Our time, talent, treasure, faith, family and prayers are all different forms of stewardship. In terms of our St. Anthony Parish, the church cannot run without stewardship. We are each called to share of our talents that we have been blessed with to keep our parish running. And as parents, we are called to



The Marohl family

teach, encourage and pray with our children, leading them by example."

"Without people actively participating in and giving of themselves, the good works of our Church will not get done," Jonathan adds.

And so, ever striving to become the good and faithful servant as described in the Gospel (Matthew 25:23) the Marohls have continuously sought out ways to use their gifts and talents

for the benefit of God and His Church. Together, they serve as Eucharistic Ministers and FOCCUS couples for marriage preparation. Jonathan also enjoys serving as a lector at Mass and singing with the choir. In addition, he is currently a member of our Parish Council, and serves as St. Anthony's Director of Religious Education. Meanwhile, Michelle, amidst caring for her children, has served in numerous leadership capacities within the

continued on back cover

"It's hard to list all the ways we've been blessed through our involvement in the parish. You get to know so many people as we all work together for the one common goal of keeping our parish running as smoothly as possible. And as a mother, it is great to be able to watch our own children grow in their faith and become themselves positive contributors toward society, both big and small." — Michelle Marohl

801 1st Street SE | Mandan, ND 58554
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.

MAROHL FAMILY JOYFULLY SERVES CHRIST AND CHURCH

continued from page 7

Christian Mothers of St. Anthony, takes great joy in leading the Rosary before Mass, and remains an active volunteer at the annual church fair.

Yet, when asked about this impressive list of ministry involvement, the couple with true humility points back to God, sharing what a great blessing serving has been to them over the years.

"These ministries have blessed my life tremendously by teaching me the greatest gifts we have are the ones we give away," Jonathan says. "And I have found that happiness for me comes when I'm able to put God first, others second, and then myself third. There is a unique and sometimes unexplainable peace that I find in

or after the moments when I'm able to surrender my own wants and needs in favor of others."

"It's hard to list all the ways we've been blessed through our involvement in the parish," Michelle adds. "You get to know so many people as we all work together for the one common goal of keeping our parish running as smoothly as possible. And as a mother, it is great to be able to watch our own children grow in their faith and become themselves positive contributors toward society, both big and small. It's truly a great feeling when I know and feel that I have made a difference for the better — when I've been able to donate my time and talent."

