

Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

DRAWING *Nearer* TO *Christ* AT THE ALTAR

For young people like William Liffrig, altar serving drives home the meaning of the Mass in a truly powerful way.

“Altar serving brings me a lot closer to the Mass, both physically and spiritually,” he says. “As a server, it is a lot harder to wander off in your thoughts during Mass, because you need to think about what is coming up next. Most of all, I really enjoy learning about what all of the symbolism behind the Mass means, especially during Holy Week when it is very rich. You gain a much better understanding of the Mass by being a server, and you come to comprehend each aspect of it well.”

William and his brother, Charlie, usually serve at least three times per month for the 11 a.m. Mass. During the six years that William has served, he has found that the honorable opportunity to serve Our Lord in the Eucharist at the altar has opened up some special doors for him.

“Serving opens up possibilities for your faith development as a person,” William says. “For example, you get to talk to your parish priest often and get to know him better. It also helps young people get used to being in front of a large group of people. Since I have been serving, I have found that I am not afraid of being on stage or being in the ‘spotlight.’”

Caitlyn Bauer, who has been giving her time

continued on page 5



THE EUCHARIST AND STEWARDSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

More than 20 years ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a pastoral letter titled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. This document was an invitation to follow Christ Who gave of Himself for us. Each of us is called to serve our neighbors and to be stewards of God's creation and of all that has been entrusted to us. However, to truly understand stewardship, we must look to the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is the total gift of our loving Savior to us. Stewardship is our response to that gift.

Even the word "Eucharist" implies stewardship. The word "Eucharist" finds its roots in the Latin word *eucharistia*, which in turn came from the Greek word *eukaristos*, which meant, quite simply, "gratitude" or "thanksgiving." How fitting that we, who are called to be a stewardship people, celebrate at the focal point of every Mass an act of thanksgiving and gratitude — namely, the reception of Jesus' gift to us — the Eucharist.

In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the bishops speak of the Eucharist in this way: "The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of this expansive communion of charity... we enjoy a unique union with Christ and, in Him, with one another. Here His love — indeed, His very Self — flows into us as disciples and, through us and our practice of stewardship to the entire human race."

When we receive Christ's Body in the Holy Eucharist, we hear the minister say, "The Body of Christ." To this, we respond, "Amen" — which means in Hebrew, "Yes; it is so." This is the essence of stewardship. We



"The Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life.' 'The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and the works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church.'" — *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1324*

should enter the Church for Mass out of "gratitude." We recognize the presence of the Lord in Holy Communion, and then we truly receive the Lord. What is left for us to do is the fulfillment of stewardship — that is, sharing what we have received in love of God and neighbor. Our entire experience speaks to stewardship — we are grateful; we recognize the real presence of the Lord; we receive the Lord; and then we share what we have received.

Christ's gift to us through the Eucharist is an invitation to us. We are called to give beyond what is convenient or what may be comfortable. We are called to forgive even when forgiveness may not be deserved; we are called to love even when that love is not returned. We are called to love as God loves us.

The Eucharist is stewardship celebrated. The Mass is more than a ritual. It is an actual encounter with God, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We need to respond to the Eucharist with our complete selves. What we experience in the Eucharist should, in turn, translate into our daily lives. We are committed to the Church, which is Christ's body. We show our love for His body by acts of charity and generosity. We spend time in prayer, expressing our gratitude and our love.

God's greatest gift to us is Christ's great love for us — this was shown when He was crucified on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to give us eternal life. God's love for us is without limit, and He offers Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Stewardship is how we respond to that gift.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

WE ARE BLESSED AS A CHURCH AND A NATION

Dear Parishioners,

The month of July may seem like a bit of an “in-between” month. Of course, it sits in the middle of summer. During this last month of June, we shared in a number of solemnities and celebrations – these served to remind us of the incredible gifts we have received as Catholics, from the Holy Trinity to the Body and Blood of Christ.

Now, a look at the calendar shows us that all of the Sundays this month are in Ordinary Time. We know that Ordinary Time is anything but “ordinary,” even though it might seem that way – especially after a month of celebrations.

However, one thing happens this month that is certainly unique to us as Americans – Independence Day. We are Catholics, but we also are Americans, and we should be proud to be both – grateful for the gift of faith, and equally grateful for the gift of liberty we receive as American citizens.

Yet, to be Catholic and American should not mean choosing one over the other. These allegiances should be complementary. Our Catholic faith states that we need to work together as fellow citizens for the common good of everyone in this great country. Through the Constitution, our Founding Fathers guaranteed us of religious



rights to contribute to our common life together.

Freedom is a special inheritance we have received, fought for by many at a great price, and it is a heritage that must be guarded – we are truly stewards of the gifts of freedom.

In 1886, just over 140 years ago, Bishop James Gibbons of Baltimore was made the second American Cardinal. He attributed the progress of the Church in America to the “civil liberty we enjoy in our enlightened republic.” He continued to say that “in the genial atmosphere of liberty, the Church blossoms like a rose.”

July is not just a time for us to celebrate – it is also a time for us to blossom. It is not a time to cease praying or working to build the Kingdom of Christ. Rather, it is a time to work even more diligently to express our appreciation for our many gifts, and to share them with others. We are blessed – by the gifts of our faith and the gifts of freedom – and we must always remember to thank God for that.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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

Msgr. Chad Gion,
Pastor

THE RADER FAMILY: *Never T*

One morning, as Amy Rader was dropping her children off at school, she was mixing up a salad in the front seat of her car, to be taken for a funeral lunch, on her way to work.

“I mentioned it at work, and this one lady looked at me and said, ‘Why are you doing that? Why don’t you let the old ladies in the church take care of it? They have all the time in the world for that,’” Amy says. “I was taken aback, I thought, ‘That’s not a reason for me not to help.’ It’s not anything big, but at the same time, it’s still contributing and it’s still helping.”

A wife, busy mom of three teenagers, and nurse, Amy and her family still find time to be involved in their parish community. Although they live in Bismarck, the Raders are active parishioners at Spirit of Life, where Amy’s husband, Tom – who serves in the North Dakota National Guard – grew up.

Although the ways that the Rader family has served has evolved – from Amy teaching CCD and helping with funeral lunches, to Tom and her recent “yes” to serving on our Stewardship Committee – they always find some way to give back to their community, in service.

The Raders’ three children – Jacob, 18; Matthew, 16; and Anna, 13 – have also found ways to become involved. All three are altar servers at Mass, and Anna has even taken the initiative to hold a bake sale, raising funds for the parish outreach.

“It’s amazing what people will



Amy, Tom, Anna, Jacob, and Matthew Rader love being involved in service at Spirit of Life.

give to a little girl who is selling baked goods for the Church,” says Amy, with a smile.

Not only do they take the time to serve at the parish, but the Raders also make a priority of deepening their faith. Attending Mass, praying together, and family faith discussions all become opportunities to grow together.

Spending time in Eucharistic Adoration has also had a significant impact on Amy’s relationship with God in prayer.

“Before adoration, I used to have a lot of anxiety, and over the past few years, it seems to have just gone away,” Amy says. “I’ve been able to resign myself to the fact that I can’t control a lot of things and worrying about things isn’t going to change them. There are times when adoration is the one

quiet hour in my week, and I think it has changed my perspective.”

Although she was born and raised Catholic, Amy has found herself hungry to learn more about the faith, and been blessed by the ways her belief has been strengthened as her knowledge has grown. She regularly listens to Real Presence Catholic Radio at 101.9 FM, and even attended RCIA classes to learn more about what it means to live out our Catholic faith.

Amy and Tom encourage other families to find ways to practice stewardship, even if it starts out small.

“Even if everyone just volunteered for one thing throughout the year – I’m sure we can all find time to do one thing,” Amy says. “There are many opportunities that come across throughout the year – I can’t

Too Busy to Give Back

Imagine that there's not something that everyone would be comfortable doing. There are so many ways to help. It doesn't have to be something super huge, but if everyone just did a little bit, we would all be able to achieve so much more."

For the Raders, giving back is a way to show their gratitude to God.

"I feel like it's the very least I can do," Amy says. "We've been very blessed and I have this sense that God is there for me, it's the least that I can do to serve someone else."

In closing, Amy recalls a piece of wisdom she once received.

"In everything you do, do it as Jesus would," she says, "At the end of the day, I try to remember that even though I'm not perfect, God works through me. I feel like the more that you're involved, the more open you do become and the more open you will be to wherever He's trying to lead you."

"There are many opportunities that come across throughout the year – I can't imagine that there's not something that everyone would be comfortable doing. There are so many ways to help. It doesn't have to be something super huge, but if everyone just did a little bit, we would all be able to achieve so much more." – Amy Rader

DRAWING NEARER TO CHRIST AT THE ALTAR

continued from front cover

As an altar server for years, Amy also finds the ministry to be rewarding and fulfilling.

"I love working at the parish, no matter what I am doing," Caitlyn says. "I just love being there and knowing I am helping out and making people feel good. I enjoy teaching younger kids to serve, as well. I also appreciate learning more about the Church and God from the time I spend with Msgr. Chad and Fr. Kadrmas."

At this time, there are about two to three servers who cover each Mass, and about 17 regular servers. More are needed to keep the Masses at our parish running smoothly and beautifully.

"It is important to realize that being close to Jesus and knowing Him in the Eucharist through your service at the altar, enables you to open yourselves to others, to journey together, to set demanding goals and to find the strength to achieve them." – St. Pope John Paul II

Those who would like to take advantage of this grace-filled opportunity and draw nearer to Christ in the Eucharist by being an altar server may contact the parish office at 701-663-1660.

GETTING TO KNOW “SUMMERTIME” SAINTS



St. Christopher



*St. Joseph of
Cupertino*



*St. Brendan the
Navigator*



*St. Adjutor
of Vernon*

School is out, and summer is now in full swing. The days are longer, warmer and filled with plenty of fun summertime activities.

This summer, as we take family vacations, get together for barbecues, spend time by the pool, and enjoy all of the usual summertime activities, we can also take the time to reflect on some of the saints who are associated with the summer.

Family vacations are perhaps the most iconic of all summertime activities. Although there is no patron saint of vacations, there are a number of saints associated with traveling. One of the most popular is St. Christopher. According to his story, St. Christopher was an extremely tall and strong man who served Christ by helping people cross an especially dangerous river. That is why many people wear St. Christopher medals while traveling – to ask for his blessing and protection.

For those of us who are taking road trips this summer, there is St. Frances of Rome, the patron saint of cars and drivers. While St. Frances died well before cars were invented, her story says that her guardian angel went ahead of her when she traveled at night and lit the road with a lantern to keep St. Frances safe.

There are also saints we can look to when traveling by plane. St. Joseph of Cupertino was a Franciscan friar who is said to have frequently and miraculously levitated off the ground during intense prayer sessions. Because of this levitation, he is recognized as the patron saint of air travelers. St. Therese of Lisieux is also associated with aviators and flying.

If you are going on a cruise this summer, you can ask for the intercession of St. Brendan the Navigator, an Irish monk who founded the Clonfert monastery and monastic school, and is the patron saint of mariners and sailors. He and his brothers sailed the Atlantic Ocean and evangelized on a number of islands, and may have even reached the Americas.

Another favorite summer activity is swimming. Whether you choose a pool, a lake or the ocean, seek the intercession of St. Adjutor of Vernon, a knight who was captured in the First Crusade. His captors tried to force him to give up his faith, but St. Adjutor escaped by swimming to his freedom. For this reason, he is the patron saint against drowning, and for drowning victims, sailors and swimmers.

The summer is also a time of amusement and enjoyment. One of the biggest national celebrations of the summer is the Fourth of July. For this type of summertime activity, we look to St. Barbara, the patron saint of fireworks.

There are also a number of saints with feast days during the summer. The feast day of St. Anne, the mother of Mary and grandmother of Jesus, is celebrated on July 26. July 31 is the feast day of St. Ignatius of Loyola, who is also associated with stewardship. These are just two of the many saints whose feasts we celebrate this summer.

No matter what kinds of activities we choose to enjoy during the summertime, let us remember to honor the saints who have gone before us, and give their intercession for us as we walk through our own journeys of faith.

PREPARED FOR A LIFETIME OF *Love AND Faith*

When it comes to marriage preparation, it's easy to get bogged down by the seemingly never-ending list of to-dos – the dress, the venue, the flowers, and all the other little details that work together to create the special day. And while the wedding day is undoubtedly important, here at Spirit of Life parish our primary focus is on preparing each couple for their sacramental life together, long after their “I dos” are exchanged on the altar.

“The wedding lasts for one day, but the marriage lasts for a lifetime,” says parishioner Julie Horter. “Our goal is to make sure that they are prepared for their life together, to make sure that they fully understand what a sacramental marriage is.”

To help make this possible, each couple wishing to be married within our parish undergoes an extensive marriage preparation process. It starts off with each couple taking the FOCCUS Pre-Marriage Inventory, which covers topics such as communication, family of origin, intimacy, finances, religion, and family planning. Following this assessment, the engaged couple is typically paired with a sponsor couple, who will then meet with them on several occasions in order to discuss their FOCCUS results, highlighting both their strengths and weaknesses as a couple.

“All we are trying to do is facilitate a discussion between the two of them on certain topics in the FOCCUS tests where their answers might have differed,” says Julie’s husband, Chuck Horter. “If the compatibility between a couple is very good, sometimes that goes really fast. Whereas if there are a lot of differences in personality, it can take a couple of sessions.”

The Marriage Prep Sponsor Couple program is unique in that it allows engaged couples to be mentored, one-on-one, by a more experienced couple. Typically hosted in the intimate environment of the mentor couple’s home, it allows the couples to get to know one another, sharing stories, experiences, and even anecdotes. All of this is done with the purpose of helping the engaged couple



Marriage Prep Sponsor Couple Chuck and Julie Horter

continued on back cover

“I always ask them, ‘why do you want to get married?’ so they’ll share the various reasons. But then, I’ll tell them that the real reason for getting married should be to get each other to heaven. And for most couples they’ll say, ‘Oh, wow, I haven’t thought about it that way.’” – Julie Horter

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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.

PREPARED FOR A LIFETIME OF LOVE AND FAITH

continued from page 7

better understand and appreciate the gift of sacramental marriage.

“The goal is to help people understand one another better, maybe even rethink certain aspects of marriage, and come together,” Chuck says. “It’s just so much better to do this before they are married – to leave no stone unturned.”

“I always ask them, ‘why do you want to get married?’ so they’ll share the various reasons,” Julie says. “But then, I’ll tell them that the real reason for getting married should be to get each other to heaven. And for most couples they’ll say, ‘Oh, wow, I haven’t thought about it that way.’”

And in the process of preparing and sharing with these engaged couples, the mentor couple

can’t help but be inspired in their own relationship – it reminds them of all the good in their own marriage, as well as of the importance of always cultivating a holy and healthy relationship with one another.

“I think it makes us stop and focus on where we are at as a couple, allowing us to better share our insight, our blessings with the young engaged couple,” Julie says.

“And when you get to meet a young couple like that, their exuberance touches and excites you,” Chuck says. “It’s just exciting to be part of that – to try help them along, strengthening their communication and helping them resolve any issues that they have before they become too big.”

If an engaged couple is interested in receiving a sponsor couple, they should contact the parish office at 701-663-1660 to learn more about Spirit of Life’s Marriage Preparation process, or visit the website: <http://www.myspiritoflife.com/the-sacraments/marriage/>.