

Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

SACRAMENT SERIES: *Holy Orders*

ANSWERING THE CALL TO SERVICE AND JOY: THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

Msgr. Chad Gion recalls a family drive home from Mass — he was around 10 at the time — when his mother turned to him and said something that proved to have a profound impact.

“Mom turned around and she said, ‘One of the women in the parish thinks you’re called to be a priest, and she’s praying for you that you’ll be a priest,’” Msgr. Gion says. “As soon as she said that, there was something in my heart that affirmed that was true.”

Years later, at his ordination in 2002, Msgr. Gion was reminded of just how appropriate it was that the journey to his vocation had begun in this fashion.

“In the ordination ceremony itself, there’s a moment where those to be ordained are presented to the congregation for their approval and the whole congregation signals their approval that these men be ordained to the priesthood via applause,” Msgr. Gion says. “The Church is expressing this fundamental truth that the Church calls men to be priests. Men don’t choose to be priests — the Church calls them.

“While on the one hand, I have to say, ‘I’m willing,’ it’s not ultimately about my will,” he adds. “It’s about God’s will and the Church’s desire for me to be a priest, for Her. To receive that call from a member of my par-

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STEWARDSHIP



THE FOUR PILLARS

You've heard about the three Ts of stewardship, but what about the four Ps?

The three Ts – Time, Talent, and Treasure – describe the personal gifts we offer to the Church. The four Ps are the Four Pillars of Parish Stewardship described by the renowned pastor Msgr. Thomas McGread. They are the hallmark of a stewardship parish – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. Let's take a look at each of them to understand how we can improve in each area.

HOSPITALITY

CHRISTIAN KINDNESS

"When I was a stranger, you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). The Gospel teaches that whenever we welcome the least of our brothers or sisters, we welcome Christ Himself. That is why the first mark of a stewardship parish is hospitality. Being friendly is one of the first ways we can be Christ-like toward others.

Modern Catholic parishes are often so large and have so many Masses that many parishioners don't know one another. To create a sense of community, be sure to smile and greet others as you enter and exit the Church. Let's try harder than ever to be a welcoming community.

1

PRAYER

HEART-TO-HEART WITH GOD

"Do not become so involved in the work of the Lord that you forget the Lord of the work," a seminary professor once taught. In other words, don't get so caught up with parish projects and outreach efforts that you forget to draw aside to spend time with God in prayer. Every great saint has taught that prayer is the most essential component in the life of the Christian. Through prayer, we nurture our most important relationship – the one that will last for all eternity.

A healthy prayer life should include communal prayer such as Mass, as well as personal prayer and family prayer. The two biggest obstacles to prayer are lack of time and lack of understanding of how to pray. We have to schedule time for prayer just as we would for an important appointment. And we have to learn how to pray from other people. Many saints have written spiritual books that describe different methods of prayer.

FORMATION

CONTINUOUS CONVERSION

Pope John Paul II always emphasized ongoing conversion. From childhood through adulthood, our whole life must be a process of drawing closer to God. He never stops calling us forward to learn more and to examine ourselves more deeply.

Very often our society values material things more than interior virtues. But as personal experience shows, when we finally acquire the car or house or "toy" that we wanted so badly, it doesn't really satisfy. On the other hand, we don't tend to desire spiritual virtues with the same kind of longing, but when we actually have them, we find them far more rewarding than material things.

3

SERVICE

LOVE IN ACTION

"Amen I say to you, whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). This Scripture was one of St. Teresa of Calcutta's favorites. Each time she picked up a poor and hungry child, she knew she was ministering to Christ. While we may not view ourselves as saints, we too are called to such heroic service right within our own community. As St. Teresa of Calcutta said, "To be a saint is not the privilege of a few, but the duty of everyone."

We have many service opportunities right here within our own parish. If you have the willingness to serve and take the initiative to find where you are needed, you'll find that there is no end to the families and individuals who truly need help. How can you reach out to them in love?

4

A LOOK BACK ON OUR 2018 STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

Our parish leadership at Spirit of Life recently conducted the 2018 Stewardship Renewal. The results of this renewal demonstrate that our parish is continuing to flourish as a stewardship community! We are very happy to share the results of the renewal in this month's parish newsletter.

- There were **919 commitments to prayer** (Stewardship of Time) from 165 households.
- The top prayer commitments included: Attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days, **155 commitments**; Spend at least 15 minutes a day in personal prayer, **133 commitments**; Pray for the sick of our parish, **106 commitments**.
- There were **593 ministry commitments** (Stewardship of Talent). Of these, 203 were new commitments to ministries, and 390 were re-commitments to ministries.
- Some of the top ministry commitments included: Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, **97 commitments**; Funeral Luncheon and Team Ministries, **75 commitments**; Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, **53 commitments**; The Spirit of Life Advent Angel Tree Ministry, **38 commitments**; Soup Kitchen/Fellowship Luncheon Ministry, **36 commitments**.
- There were **131 offertory commitments** (Stewardship of Treasure). The average annual pledge was \$2,133.

If you did not participate in the 2018 Stewardship Renewal, we encourage you to find ways to become involved here at Spirit of Life — there is something for everyone!

We thank all who took part in the Stewardship Renewal, and we thank all members of our parish family for making Spirit of Life such a strong community of faith!

Welcoming Christ
2018 RENEWAL HANDBOOK

Talent (cont.)
 = Currently Involved = Interested in Joining
 ↓ Clearly write the first name of family member on the line.

Religious Education (cont.)

- Junior High Faith Formation
- Marriage Preparation Sponsor Couple
- Religious Education (Grades 3-6)
- The Flame

Parish Life

- Child Care
- Hospitality Sunday
- Intercessory Prayer Ministry
- Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Prayer Line
- Rosary Guild

Outreach

- Empowerment Group
- Funeral & Grief Ministry
- Funeral Luncheon & Team Ministry
- Holiday Food Baskets
- Holy Communion to the Homebound Ministry
- Hospital & Care Center Visitation Ministry

Talent (cont.)

= Currently Involved = Interested in Joining
 ↓ Clearly write the first name of family member on the line.

Outreach (cont.)

- Mother Teresa Food Pantry/Outreach Meals
- Nurse Ministry
- Prayer Blanket Ministry
- Soup Kitchen/Fellowship Luncheon Ministry
- The Spirit of Life Advent Angel Tree Ministry

Parish Committees

- Finance Council
- Parish Council
- Stewardship Committee

Administration

- Building and Grounds Helpers
- Office Helpers
- Other Occupational Talents

2018 Commitment Card
 My Offering of Time, Talent & Treasure

First & Last Name (One card per family) _____
 Street Address _____
 City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
 Telephone (Important) _____
 Email _____

Spirit of Life
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I WANT TO B

BY SHELLY



She's sick. We knew it before she was born, that our new granddaughter would need a surgery as soon as she was old enough to withstand it. As I looked down at her frail body, I felt as if she were mine. But she wasn't mine. Her parents were cautiously cradling her in the NICU crib while awaiting her surgery. My son, Matthew, and his wife, Kendra were frightened, but they remained united, strong and vigilant. To see my son love another human being this much brought me to tears.

We all gathered in the patient waiting area as they wheeled our 6-week-old little Willa Josephine away for surgery. They spotted her cyst in utero and it had continued to grow. Now it had become life threatening. We waited and waited. The nurse came out from time to time to inform us of the progress. One hour turned into two, and the nervousness throughout our family could be felt by anyone who was sitting close to us. The waiting room grew emptier as the day went on until we were the only ones left.

When we were finally called back to meet with the surgeon, we were all fearful and apprehensive. He started drawing on a white board explaining the difficulty of the surgery, and how during one point they had to resuscitate her. Pam, Kendra's mother, looked at me crying, "They almost lost her!" I was too stunned and shocked to reply.

As soon as we were able, we rushed up to see her. I was so saddened to see my precious little granddaughter hooked up to so many machines. My heart ached at the fact that she was probably in pain. I felt helpless. Before we had left for her surgery, we enlisted an army of friends, and family members to pray for her. I was so grateful for their prayers at that very moment and throughout the days that lay ahead.

Willa really struggled after the surgery. In fact, she spent 52 days in and out of the hospital. I marveled at how well my oldest son handled all of this. He said

BE THAT GUY

PRESZLER

someone asked him how their marriage was handling the stress. To which he replied, “This is a stressful situation, but it’s not stressful on our marriage.”

Over time the number of people praying for our little granddaughter’s life overwhelmed my son, his wife and me. During one of the roughest patches, I showed up to my small prayer group and the women all asked about her. I looked down and saw that one of the women had written Willa’s name on her hand, so that she would remember to pray for her throughout the day. Wow! I was amazed at their love and concern for this small child who meant the world to me and my husband and our whole family.

The next six months proved to be grueling with more hospitalizations and another surgery. I was scared, and told anyone I could think of to pray for Willa. I emailed Msgr. Richter and he responded that he would sacrifice his lunch for her that day in a fast. Msgr. Chad, who knew Matthew well, as they had backpacked earlier that year, constantly promised his prayers for them as well. Sr. Mary Michael was a regular prayer warrior, as well as my Bible study and numerous friends.

During the very last surgery, I was beside myself and went to another room alone to pray quietly. But I wasn’t alone. I looked up from my rosary and found a shoeless, homeless man on my right and a prisoner in an orange jumpsuit on my left. I pondered what they might be here for and decided to pray for them too. When I looked over at the homeless man he remarked, “Ma’am, you look tired.” I replied, “I am tired.” He agreed, “Yeah, this place will do it you.”

Once again, we were called back to meet with the surgeon, who was so relieved. He said they were able to correct the problem, and Willa’s surgery was a success. He exclaimed, “She should be just fine!” This poor surgeon had taken so much stock in our precious granddaughter. He shared how he had endured many sleepless nights over her. He even cancelled an out-of-state conference just to be there to care for Willa when she was readmitted. How could we ever repay him?

When we arrived back in Bismarck, I was greeted at daily Mass by my friend, Nancy, who immediately asked me how Willa was. I nearly burst into tears of joy as I told her she was going to be just fine. She pulled me aside and said, “Now you know what you need to do?”

“What?” I questioned.

“Now it’s time for prayers of thanksgiving,” she reminded me.

Of course, I thought to myself. How could I ever thank God enough for the goodness of Willa’s life and restoration to good health?

I’m ashamed to admit how often I beg God in prayer for both large and small needs throughout my day and then forget to thank Him. It reminded me of how pathetic our little book of petitions and thanksgiving is outside our adoration chapel. The prayer request page is filled to the brim daily, while the thanksgiving page remains virtually empty! Surely Christ has graciously heard our prayers in the chapel.

Like the 10 lepers who were healed by Christ, I want to be the one leper who came back and thanked Him. I want to thank Him every day for the rest of my life. I want to be that guy!

“I WANT TO THANK HIM EVERY DAY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.”

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH THE HOLY FATHER: THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!

“Let the Church always be a place of mercy and hope, where everyone is welcomed, loved and forgiven.”

These words from Pope Francis weren't delivered during a homily in St. Peter's or in a speech from St. Peter's Square — nor were they written in a papal bull or apostolic letter. Rather, they were delivered in an instant to millions of Catholics around the world through the pope's very own Twitter account.

The technology of communication has perhaps changed more in the past century than in the previous 20 combined. And with these developments, the Catholic Church — led by our Holy Fathers, from Pope St. John Paul II through Pope Francis — strongly encourages that the faithful adopt and adapt these resources for the all-important task of spreading the Gospel throughout the whole world.

Just as St. Paul used every convenience at his disposal to spread the Gospel throughout the far reaches of the Roman empire, today's evangelists are using every resource available to them. Examples of Catholic figures using the new media with great success abound.

Only a few months into his pontificate, Pope Francis took the Vatican's social media efforts to a whole new level. A few years ago, the Vatican released *The Pope App*, which features quotes, news, images and videos of all the Holy Father's latest doings.

Following the pope's lead, bishops, priests and apologists are taking the technological gifts at their fingertips and utilizing them to spread the Gospel throughout the world in a variety of ways.

One great example is Bishop Robert Barron of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, whose Word On Fire Ministry has produced wildly popular YouTube videos discussing everything from controversial Church teachings to movie reviews from a Catholic perspective. Word On Fire also



released the critically acclaimed Catholicism DVD documentary series.

Independent Catholic bloggers and Web-based media are also widely established and provide their audiences and readership with Catholic news and cultural commentary.

Here in America, parishes, Catholic schools, dioceses, and even the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops are utilizing these tools as well, creating first-rate websites, maintaining Twitter and Facebook accounts, and more.

All of these resources are geared toward a wide variety of audiences, from the un-churched and fallen-away Catholics to active parishioners.

Being knowledgeable of the new media tools available to us as Catholics is a great way to be more effective in our universal call to evangelization. Take some time to see what media resources our parish and diocese are using, and be sure to pass them along to those in your sphere of influence!

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS *continued from front cover*

ish and to experience an almost immediate affirmation of it, I look back on that as a singular grace in my life.”

But despite feeling the call to become a priest at an early age, the prospect was not always something that brought him joy. Growing up as the oldest of five children in small-town Regent, N.D., Msgr. Gion attended minor seminary at Cardinal Muench Seminary in Fargo, followed by St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. Even as he progressed towards ordination, there were still times when he wondered what his life would entail.

“[I wondered], ‘How is it possible that priesthood is anything other than a whole series of painful sacrifices built up on top of one another?’” Msgr. Gion says. “But the fact that it was what God was calling me to never diminished. But although I was fraught with uncertainty about how this could be a good life, I moved towards it because I couldn’t see how I could do anything else.”

However, since being ordained over 15 years ago, Msgr. Gion has realized that his concerns couldn’t have been farther from the truth.

“My understanding and my experience is that God doesn’t ask anything of me that doesn’t lead to a greater capacity for joy,” Msgr. Gion says. “Everything that God asks of me opens my heart to a greater ability to receive Him and His life, which is joy.

“If it’s a hard thing that He asks me to do and I jump in with both feet and I trust Him, it opens me up more and more to His life,” he adds.

“Every time I come out of a situation that I think is going to be really difficult and I survive and it goes well, I see where God’s grace is at work in it, and it increases my ability to trust that whatever He asks it’s going to be fine.”

Celebrating the sacraments is one of Msgr. Gion’s favorite parts of being a priest.

“When someone comes into the confessional and says, ‘Bless me Father, for I have sinned, it’s been 30 years since my last confession,’ I get very excited,” he says. “Everything about their life is about to be different and it’s going to be really fantastic for them. They’re still scared and guilt-laden and all that, but by the time we’re done, it’s just amazing — they’re free and they’re home. Being able to do that when someone is in that kind of circumstance, when they’ve been away from the Church for a long time, that is a powerful experience of God’s grace at work.”

In his ministry, Msgr. Gion’s desire is to be a willing instrument, through whom God can freely work.

“In the end, I’m not causing anything to happen — I’m purely instrumental,” he says. “By virtue of ordination to the priesthood, I am *In Persona Christi*, but it requires me to be very small and Him to be very big. The prayer of a good priest should be that of John the Baptist, ‘He must increase, I must decrease.’ The more it’s Him and the less it’s me, the more His grace can be poured out through me into the lives of others.”

Msgr. Gion encourages people who are

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Thank you, Msgr. Gion!

As we bid farewell to Msgr. Chad Gion, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for his devoted and faithful service to our Spirit of Life parish family. We wish Msgr. Gion the best as he proceeds on his vocation journey.

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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.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS *continued from page 7*

discerning God's call, regarding their vocation, to turn to Him in prayer and be open to where the Holy Spirit leads.

"Talk to Jesus about it and ask Him if it's what He wants," Msgr. Gion says. "Go to Him with the expectation that He does, in fact, care what we do in our lives and will give us direction. Go to Him in prayer, ask Him what He wants and then be attentive to what [you] are experiencing internally in prayer. The desires the Lord places in our hearts are not there coincidentally. Those desires will never be quashed and they'll never be denied — it's just a question of how they'll be fulfilled. Trusting in God with our vocations and what we do with our lives allows Him to lead

us to the thing that's going to fulfill our deepest desires, and do it in a way that conforms to how He's made us, what we're made for."

He reminds that God's plans for our lives are far greater than anything we could've imagined.

"You just have to trust that God has our absolute best in His heart for us," Msgr. Gion says. "Being obedient to Him will always lead to greater joy, greater satisfaction in life, a greater connection to those around us and a deeper connection to Him.

"A vocation to the priesthood or religious life will never leave us less connected — it will always leave us more connected to the human family, to ourselves and to God," he adds. "And I'm experiencing that in living my vocation to the priesthood."

Please pray for those from our parish who are discerning a call to the priesthood, religious or consecrated life, especially two men from Spirit of Life who have applied to be seminarians for our diocese, to begin formation for the priesthood. For more information on exploring a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, please contact our diocesan Vocations Director, Fr. Joshua Waltz, at 701-471-5758 or frjoshwaltz@gmail.com.