

St. John the Apostle

PARISH NEWSLETTER

"We Bring Christ to Each of Them" St. John's Homebound Visitation Ministry

As Clarine Sandstrom began learning about the many varied ways to serve the Lord and His Church at the local level, she discovered that one of these invaluable opportunities connects ministers and homebound parishioners for fellowship and friendship.



"Members of this ministry receive names of people in the parish who could use a visitor to share some coffee, conversation and prayer," Clarine says. "These parishioners could be elderly, recovering from an illness, facing the loss of a spouse, or suffering from depression due to loss of a job."

Clarine joined St. John's in 2006 and was prompted to do so because of how warmly the faith community welcomed her and because of the community's commitment to stewardship.

"St. John's is a beautiful, spirit-filled and prayerful parish," Clarine says. "For me, stewardship is an act of humility through extending heartfelt love, mercy and compassion to those in need of receiving."

Clarine has formed several friendships with the parishioners throughout the past year and a half. One lady she visits with usually has a list of little things that she'd like help with around the house.

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"I believe this is the kind of service St. Mother Teresa modeled and emphasized. She said, 'Let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.' In that spirit, we bring Christ to each of them we visit." – Clarine Sandstrom

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Service

The Fourth Pillar of Parish Stewardship

Throughout Sacred Scripture, there are numerous references to service. There is the parable of the vigilant and faithful servants who await their master's return from a wedding, "ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks" (Lk 12:35-40). There is the story of the good Samaritan who was moved with compassion to help the victim of a violent robbery (Lk 10:25-37). And there are several examples of Christ serving those around Him – feeding the multitudes, healing the sick, and even turning water into wine at a wedding banquet.

Why is service a running theme throughout the Gospels? Because service is at the root of living in imitation of Christ. Christ served others throughout His life on Earth, and His death on the cross was the ultimate act of service to mankind. And when we serve others, we are not only following in Christ's footsteps, we are also serving Christ Himself: "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40).

As a stewardship parish, service must be at the heart of everything we do. The parish community is the bastion of service within the Catholic Church, as we serve one another and are also served by our brothers and sisters in Christ. As the Diocese of Wichita's document, *The Pillars of Parish Stewardship*, states, "Like a blood family, the parish family stands ready and eager collectively to wrap their arms around their brothers and sisters when they suffer in trial and/or celebrate special events in their lives."

It is good to recognize the parish community as a place where service is appreciated and can be utilized for the good of the Church. However, it is not enough for us to simply serve other members of our parish family. As disciples of Christ, it is our obligation to serve people in need everywhere they exist – in our families, our greater community, our country, and throughout the world. This can be a challenging concept, as it is often much more comfortable and convenient to serve those who are close to us than it is to reach out to "outsiders." But, as *The Pillars of Parish Stewardship* eloquently points out, "Failure to have this understanding leads to a selfish parochialism, which is life-draining to a parish stewardship way of life."

Think of ways that you can serve others around you, both within our parish family and in the greater community. Our many parish ministries offer a great place to begin offering your time and talents, but the opportunities for service don't end there. There are many civic and nonprofit organizations that do an immense amount to serve others across the globe and are always looking for volunteers.

Once you serve, you will find that you will reap numerous rewards in return, much like the faithful servants who doubled the talents their master had entrusted to them: "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy" (Mt 25:21).

serve

A Letter from Our Pastor

Lent Is More Than Preparation for Easter

Dear brothers and sisters,

In 2013, Pope Francis issued his first significant work. It was what is called an “apostolic exhortation” titled *The Joy of the Gospel* (*Evangelii Gaudium* in Latin). While Rome may use fancy words for some of these things, an “exhortation” of this sort does not change any official Church rules or traditions. However, it does offer advice and encouragement about how we should live our lives.

Pope Francis offers this kind of guidance on a regular basis, but this one in particular seems to present us with suggestions that are worthy of our consideration, especially during Lent. The pope called us to become missionary disciples: “The Church which ‘goes forth’ is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 24).

Speaking about his exhortation, Pope Francis said, “One of the riches of the Second Vatican Council was to remind the Church of the two ‘lenses’ of the season of Lent: baptismal and penitential.” In fact, Vatican II noted specifically, “The two elements which are especially characteristic of Lent – the recalling of baptism or the preparation for it, and penance – should be given greater emphasis in the liturgy and in liturgical catechesis. It is by means of them that the Church prepares the faithful for the celebration of Easter, while they hear God’s word more frequently and devote more time to prayer” (*Companion to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1348).

It might be well for us to keep these in mind during Lent. There were vows made during our baptism, and this is the time of year to try to fulfill those vows, in addition to reaffirming them. We are given various opportunities to renew these vows, and we may tend to do it automatically without a thought. Now, however, is the time to think. Perhaps during Lent, we can renew these vows as families – and we must not necessarily do it in church or at a Mass. Then, we need to do something during Lent to help each of us understand what that renewal means.



The other important part of Lent pointed out by Pope Francis has to do with penance. Most of us have heard the traditional practices of Lent – fasting, prayer, reception of the Sacraments, and almsgiving. These are things that may bring us closer to Christ. By fasting, we may gain a greater understanding of the hunger the Lord feels for our souls; by increased prayer, we join in union with God; through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, we become a greater part of that union with God; through giving alms, we empty ourselves in part, just as Jesus emptied Himself for us on the cross.

This is a time to do more than prepare for Easter. This is a time to change how we may approach living and our faith. God bless you now and throughout this holiest of seasons.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. David A. Richter

Fr. David Richter,
Pastor

Are You Getting

Everywhere you look, there is something begging for your attention. From your phone, to your tablet, to your laptop, or TV, there's more content than ever before, available right at your fingertips. It's easy to spend hours researching on the Internet or let time slip away binge watching your favorite show on Netflix. But what would your life, and your relationship with God, look like if you spent some of that time learning about your faith?

For St. John parishioners who want to grow closer to God, it's easier than ever, through our new parish subscription to FORMED.org.

"FORMED is kind of a 'Netflix for Catholics,'" says Lou Reynolds, the Managing Director for FORMED.

FORMED is a streaming service that allows users unlimited access to online video, audio, and electronic

book content, 24/7, wherever you are. From an audio Bible, to studies on prayer, to movies about the lives of the Saints, FORMED has something for everyone, young and not so young, those who have been studying the faith for years, and those who have just become curious about who Jesus is. Whether you are looking for something to listen to on your commute to work, or just want to access more Catholic books on your kindle, FORMED is a tool that allows you to grow in your faith, for free, on your own schedule.

"That's the beauty of this technology – it really makes it accessible to people anywhere, anytime, no matter where they are in their faith journey," Lou says.

"It is very easy to use," adds Monica Perry, Director of Religious Education.

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“After speaking with other priests about FORMED and checking it out for myself, it became obvious how great it could be for every parishioner to have access to such great Catholic resources,” says Fr. Richter, Pastor.

For many people, the journey of learning about one’s Catholic faith stops when they finish faith formation, as a child or teenager. But FORMED provides resources that allow that journey to continue.

“[It’s important to continue your faith formation] for the same reason it is important for a married couple to spend time together,” says Fr. Richter. “Once a person falls in love with another, it is necessary to spend time with one another to grow deeper and deeper in love by knowing more and more profoundly the mystery of who the beloved is. Without this growth, the relationship becomes stagnant and it simply becomes a duty instead of a joy-filled adventure!”

What better time than Lent, to dedicate time to going deeper in your faith?

“Lent is a perfect time to make an intentional choice to do something that will make a positive difference in my relationships with others, and it all starts with my relationship with God,” Fr. Richter says.

“Fr. Richter mentioned *Forgiven: The Transforming Power of Confession* – I plan on watching it soon,” Monica says. “I believe it would be a good one to watch at any time, but especially during Lent.”

All parishioners are encouraged to log on and explore the variety of resources, on many topics, available through your parish subscription, at no cost to you.

“Anyone and everyone can benefit from accessing these resources,” Monica says. “No matter who you are or how old you are, there is always something new we can learn by using the resources that are available to us. This is a wonderful gift that has been given to us by our parish that should be used.”

“There is no better use of one’s time than spending it with God,” Fr. Richter says. “Jesus invited the first disciples to ‘come and see,’ come spend time with Him. This changed their lives.

“And, do not be unrealistic,” he continues. “Commit to 30 minutes of watching or listening to material on FORMED two or three times a week. Start reasonably, and when the encounter happens, the desire will grow and it will become easy to spend time with God! It doesn’t cost anything but time.”



You can register for FORMED.org by following the instructions below, or by clicking on the link for “Parish ‘FORMED’ Program” under “Important Links” on our homepage, www.stjohnminot.com.

To Register with our Parish on FORMED:

1. Visit FORMED.org
2. Click on “Register” tab in lower right of the page
3. Enter the access code: FNN8CC
4. Enter profile info and choose password.
5. Receive email and click on link to login.

Enjoy and please tell others!

What Is The Chrism Mass?

The Chrism Mass celebrated throughout the Catholic world is traditionally held on the morning of Holy Thursday, unless for pastoral reasons the local bishop or archbishop moves it to another suitable day during Holy Week.

There are basically two purposes for this annual High Mass. At the Chrism Mass, the archbishop (or bishop) blesses three oils — the oil of catechumens (*oleum catechumenorum* or *oleum sanctorum*), the oil of the infirm (*oleum infirmorum*) and holy chrism (*sacrum chrisma*) — which will be used in the administration of the sacraments throughout the diocese for the following year. In addition, archdiocesan and religious order priests renew their vows.

Anointing with oils has been a practice in the Church since Old Testament times. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says this about holy oils: “Anointing with oil has all these meanings in the sacramental life. The pre-baptismal anointing with the oil of catechumens signifies cleansing and strengthening; the anointing of the sick expresses healing and comfort. The post-baptismal anointing with sacred chrism in Confirmation and ordination is the sign of consecration. By Confirmation Christians, those who are anointed, share more completely in the mission of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit with which he is filled, so that their lives may give off ‘the aroma of Christ’” (1294).

Each of us Catholics already has received some of the benefits given through these holy oils — namely, in the Sacrament of Baptism and in the conferring of the Sacrament of Confirmation. We hope to someday obtain further graces through them in the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (formerly called extreme unction). Yet, most of us know very little about these sacred oils. Moreover, few of us are able to be present when the solemn blessing of them takes place in a cathedral church.

The whole concept of “anointing” has a strong Church tradition. Throughout the Bible, various references indicate the importance of olive oil in daily life. Oil was used in cooking, particularly in the making of bread, that basic food substance for



nourishment; as a fuel for lamps; and as a healing agent in medicine. Moreover, with oil, the Jews anointed the head of a guest as a sign of welcome, beautified one’s appearance, and prepared a body for burial.

Sacred Scripture also attests to the spiritual symbolism of oil. Psalm 45:7 reads, “You love justice and hate wickedness; therefore, God your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellow kings,” signifying the special designation from God and the joy of being His servant. Moreover, to be “the anointed” of the Lord indicated receiving a special vocation from the Lord and the empowerment with the Holy Spirit to fulfill that vocation: Jesus, echoing the words of Isaiah, spoke, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore, He has anointed me” (Lk 4:18).

St. Paul emphasized this point as well, “God is the one Who firmly establishes us along with you in Christ; it is He Who anointed us and has sealed us, thereby depositing the first payment, the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor 1:21). Therefore, the symbolism of oil is rich sanctification, healing, strengthening, beautification, dedication, consecration, and sacrifice.

At the Chrism Mass, the archbishop will bless three different oils: the oil of catechumens, for adult and infant Baptisms; the oil of the sick, for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick; and the oil of chrism — a fragrancd oil blessed only by the bishop for Baptisms, Confirmations, ordination, and the consecration of sacred spaces. After Mass, each priest receives a sufficient amount of all three oils to be used at parishes, schools, hospitals, and other places where they may be assigned and functioning.

In addition, the priests renew their vows at this Mass. The archbishop will ask the priests as a group, “Beloved sons, in remembrance of that day when Christ our Lord conferred His priesthood on His Apostles, and on us, are you resolved to renew, in the presence of your bishop and God’s holy people, the promises you once made?” To this, the priests respond in unison, “I am.”

Please consider attending the Chrism Mass as part of your Lenten journey.

Spreading the Warmth of Christ The Prayer Blanket Ministry

When a person is sick or suffering, few things feel more comforting than a warm blanket. And when it's a blanket that has been carefully made by loving hands and heartfelt prayers that warmth only grows, becoming a tangible reminder of God's love for that person. This, says parishioner Bertha Wald, is what makes the Prayer Blanket Ministry so meaningful.

"Parishioners are just so thankful for them," Bertha says. "Some who receive it feel like it really aided their recovering, saying the prayer blanket was a huge source of comfort. One fellow was dying and his biggest concern was who would receive his blessed blanket. It was so powerful and meaningful to him that he was anxious to ensure the blanket was passed on to someone else when he was gone."

Handmade by generous volunteers, each blanket is blessed by Fr. David Richter. In this way, they become holy blankets, representing the support and intercessory prayer of the entire faith community. Once blessed, blankets are then distributed to parishioners for a variety of needs such as illness, recovery from surgery or an injury, and even mental distress.

"Usually, as we're making the blankets, we offer up prayers for the recipients, hoping that they will find comfort through this blanket," Bertha says. "We also say a prayer over the person and blanket when we deliver them. I personally feel so blessed when I go into a home and give this blanket to someone. It is truly heartwarming."

For Bertha, one of the special blessings of this ministry is that it truly enables her to embody stewardship, incorporating all three aspects of giving. Long having quilted as a hobby, Bertha joyfully donates her time and talent for a higher purpose. And although most quilting supplies are donated, she will frequently run to the store for the "right color thread" or additional material.



"I guess I live out all of the stewardship categories – time, talent, and treasure – by making these blankets," Bertha says. "It's truly a beautiful way to embody stewardship. And I truly love doing the quilts."

Another blessing of the Prayer Blanket Ministry has been the monthly gatherings, providing fellowship and encouragement for its members. Taking place the third Thursday of each month after the 9 a.m. Mass, these meetings typically include coffee and treats, prayer and fellowship, and a kind of "show and tell" of finished products.

"Ladies will bring in these truly beautiful quilts," Bertha says. "It's so encouraging to get together with these gals who are all doing the same thing as you are and to see the finished products. We enjoy one another's company and each one of us inspires one another to keep giving to the ministry."

Parishioners can support the Prayer Blanket Ministry by joining our committed quilters or by donating quilting supplies. The ministry is also always trying to learn of parishioners' ailments and emotional needs, so that we can ensure each suffering or sick member receives a prayer blanket. To learn more about this beautiful ministry, please contact either ministry coordinator Eileen Kraft at 701-839-6790 or Bertha Wald at 701-838-1038.



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Sacrament of Reconciliation

Wednesday - Friday: 8:30 AM - 8:50 AM
Saturday: 3:45 PM - 4:45 PM
Sunday: 9:30 AM - 10:15 AM

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Saturday: 5:00 PM Mass
Sunday: 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM Mass

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St. John's Homebound Visitation Ministry

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“What I have found out over time is that she is really lonely and needs a little extra time to talk by engaging me in what she needs done at the time,” Clarine says. “Developing and maintaining friendships is what this ministry is about.”

The ministry is also about, according to Clarine, preserving the dignity of our fellow parishioners, while extending love and compassion to those in need.

“I believe this is the kind of service St. Mother Teresa modeled and emphasized,” Clarine says. “She said, ‘Let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.’ In that spirit, we bring Christ to each of them we visit.”

The Homebound Visitation Ministry frequently struggles with maintaining ministry leaders and members because of

how challenging the scheduling of visits can be in light of parishioners’ work schedules.

“When one of our more recent co-leaders moved out-of-state, I called Margaret Kendall, who has served as leader and co-leader of the ministry for a number of years, and offered to assist with this valuable ministry,” Clarine says.

Though being a part of the Homebound Visitation Ministry can be challenging because of our busy schedules, it offers an opportunity for us to form meaningful and life-giving friendships with the members of our community who might feel marginalized.

“Regardless of all that daily life entails, I would encourage becoming involved for no other reason than this is what Christ asks of us and what the saints modeled for us,” Clarine says.

If you would like more information about St. John's Homebound Visitation Ministry, please reach out to Clarine Sandstrom at csandstrom@srt.com or 701-390-4286.