

St. John the Apostle

PARISH NEWSLETTER

"A Focused Approach to Prayer" The e5 Men's Ministry

It was 15 years ago when a man named Steve Habisohn from Illinois heard then-pope St. John Paul II's call for a "new evangelization." Steve knew one of the best ways to approach evangelization was through fellow men. Habisohn had learned by studying the pope's teachings on marriage and the family that wives and children naturally followed the example set by husbands and fathers.



As a result, Steve Habisohn founded an apostolate dedicated to the Church's teachings on marriage and sexuality and established e5 Men. Now, some 6,000 members nationwide fast for their brides and the intentions of women at least once a month. We have a chapter of the e5 Men here at St. John the Apostle – our e5 Men group was established by parishioner Mike Labonte.

"This was a perfect ministry for me for many, many reasons," says participant Dan Lester. "I certainly appreciated and embraced the purpose of the e5 Men's Ministry, and I needed to find a focused approach to prayer. The fact that there were no meetings, and this was a commitment I made personally and could carry out on my own also appealed to me."

This ministry is open to all men – married, widowed or single – who are looking for a way to prayerfully support family life and marriage in the Church. As Dan notes, the e5 Man fasts for his bride as a way to imitate Jesus as described by St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 5 – for which the e5 is named. The e5 Men fast in unison on bread and water for at least one 24-hour day per month – preferably the first Wednesday of the month."

"Jesus made a bodily sacrifice on the Cross for His bride the Church to present her to God the Father 'without spot or wrinkle' (Eph 5:27)," Dan says. "By fasting

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St. John the Apostle
2600 Central Avenue W.
Minot, ND 58701
701-839-7076
www.stjohnminot.com



The Bible

The Textbook of Stewardship

Have you ever wished that life came with an instruction manual? What a valuable resource that would be! Whenever you find yourself running in circles, this instruction manual would give you step-by-step instructions on how to fix the problem and reroute your course.

Well, here's some good news. For those living a Christian life, there is such a manual – the Bible.

Sometimes referred to as the “textbook of stewardship,” the Bible is a bountiful resource for the present-day Christian. Written by anointed prophets and sages, this collection of divinely inspired parables, poems and letters is full of testimonials that express the blessings that come from true discipleship, expressed through lives of stewardship.

Stewardship is not a new concept. The Bible gives proof to this claim through passages such as the 26th chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. We read Moses' words, as he tells the Israelites to offer the choicest portions of their harvest to God: “When you have come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the Lord, your God, gives you, and putting them in a basket, you shall go to the place which the Lord, your God, will choose for the dwelling place of his name... ‘Therefore, I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have given me.’ And having set them before the LORD, your God, you shall bow down in his presence” (Dt 26:1-2, 10).

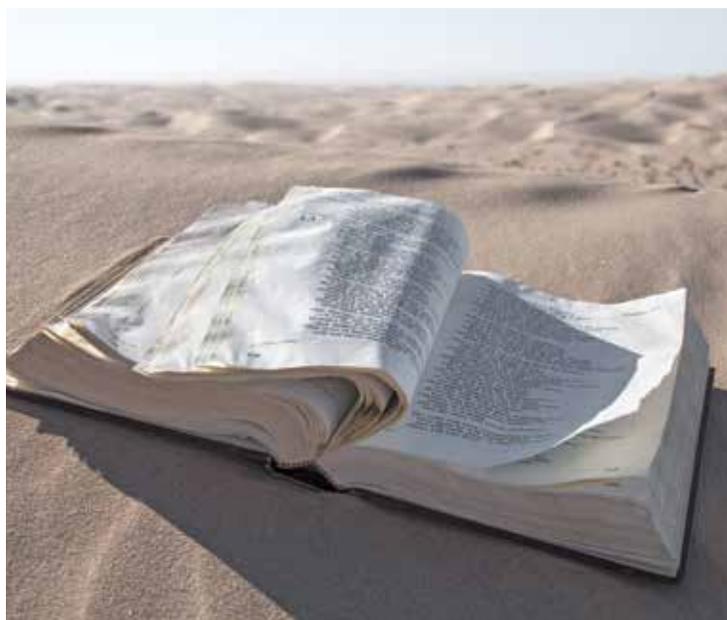
St. Paul briefly touches on the essence of stewardship when he said, “In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

Again, in St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, we read about living a life of Christian stewardship: “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:6-7).

While this is well and good, what does it mean for the present-day Christian? Why should it matter that the Bible alludes to stewardship in various passages? It shows us that Christians and Jews have struggled with and benefitted from the concept of stewardship for thousands of years. It ties the message of stewardship to the role of a Christian disciple. It gives proof that stewardship and discipleship go hand-in-hand. It offers encouragement to us, that stewardship is in fact a foundational component of the Christian life, a way of life that one of the founding fathers of the Church – St. Paul – preached about and advocated.

The Bible is indeed the textbook of stewardship. It lays out the steps we must take to become true disciples of Christ. Reading and meditating upon God's Word is always a fruitful exercise. Those who regularly delve into Scripture often develop a deeper understanding of who God is, how and why He loves us, and how we can show Him our love in return.

As you strive to become a grateful steward and live the life of Christian discipleship, develop a love for Sacred Scripture. Allow God's Word to nourish your soul regularly, and watch as stewardship changes from a foreign concept to an integral component of your daily life.



A Letter from Our Pastor

We Cannot Be Part-Time Christians

Dear brothers and sisters,

May is traditionally celebrated in the Church as the month of Mary, our Blessed Mother. As the Mother of the Church, she provides us with an example of what it means to be a servant of God and our fellow humans, as well as how to obediently fulfill the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

As Catholics, we are called to model the life of Jesus. That can be difficult, and there are certainly challenges to living as a disciple of Christ. But living stewardship and discipleship brings intense contentment and joy to those who take that risk. As we hear in St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "All things work for good for those who love God."

After Jesus Himself, we look to our Blessed Mother as an ideal steward and an example of what stewardship means. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her life and her ministry in a total spirit of faithfulness and service. She responded to the call to be a disciple. For us to be disciples, we also need to be good stewards of the gifts we have received. Our Church and our parish are gifts to us from God.

At no point in Holy Scripture does Jesus tell us that following Him is easy. We know it is not always simple and effortless. It requires dedication and commitment. Pope Francis has said on more than one occasion, "We cannot be part-time Christians and Catholics! We should seek to live our faith at every moment of every day."

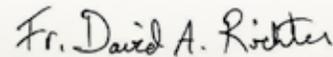
I suspect that is how Mary lived her life from that moment she turned it over to God and His Will. So, let us vow together during this month of Mary to follow her example, and seek to be the kinds of good stew-

ards that will make our faith community even stronger and more effective.

I pray that we all can find the strength to live and practice our faith as we should. This means being faithful to the sacraments and looking for ways to help and serve one another. We have a great parish – let us make it even greater.

As we hear in Holy Scripture, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). Pray for me, as I pray for you.

Yours in Christ,



Fr. David Richter,
Pastor



Journeying Toward Meet Parishioners

Every once in a while, we are blessed to encounter a truly exceptional person. That person is someone who is always eager to lend a helping hand; who loves God and others wholeheartedly; who embraces both the joys and sorrows of life as part of a greater plan. Such has been the life of former parishioner Katie Fontaine, who was and continues to be an inspiration to us all.

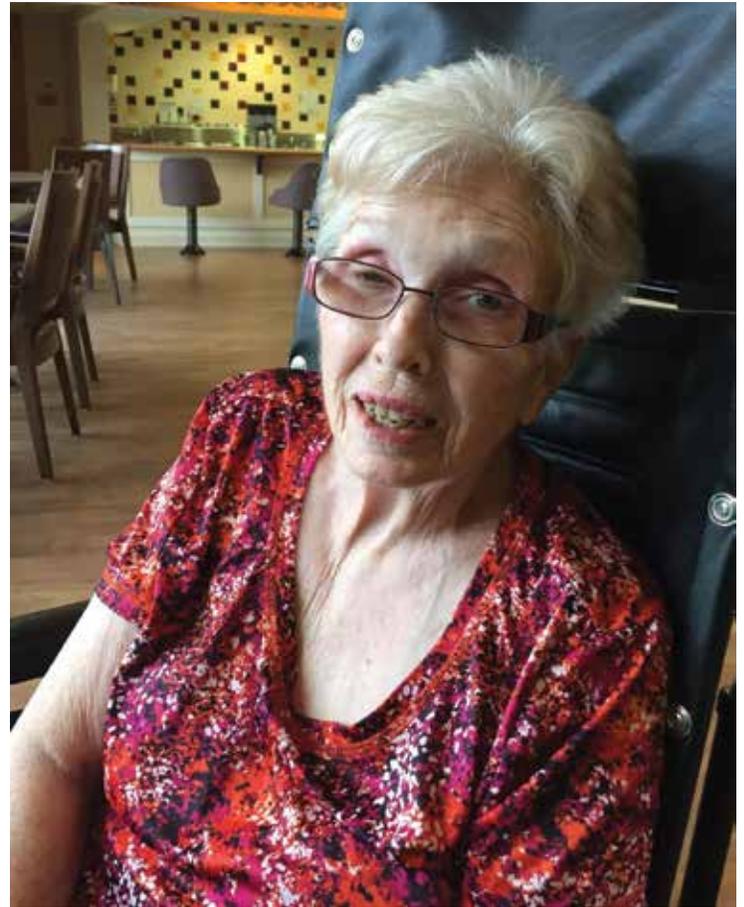
“Katie took stewardship to heart,” says lifelong friend Margaret Kendall. “When asked, Katie would give 100 percent. She truly lives the stewardship way of life because she loves Christ wholeheartedly and remains His dedicated disciple.”

Born the oldest of six girls, Katie became a second mother to her sisters when their father died. Though only 10 years old at the time, Katie grew up quickly so as to assist her mother and help with the younger children. Later, during her adulthood, Katie had other struggles and crosses, yet she always maintained a positive and loving attitude.

“She never utters unkind words,” says Clarine Sandstrom. “I truly believe that she is on the journey toward sainthood.”

One of the places where Katie’s caring and patient nature shone the brightest was in her professional life, where she worked as a speech and language therapist with children of varying disabilities. As a former principal, Clarine was profoundly impacted by Katie’s personable approach with each of her students.

“I always enjoyed going into her classroom to observe the interactions between the children and their therapist,” Clarine says. “It was so personal and you could see, as well as feel, the genuine love and respect transmitted between Katie and the child with whom she was working. These relationships did not end when the



Katie Fontaine, joyful and loving servant of the Lord.

children moved through their school years and out into the world.”

“Katie loved her family for sure, but she also loved her school family tremendously,” Margaret adds. “To this day, she remembers clearly her handicapped students’ names and what most of them are doing in their present life. One of her students, now 30 years old, is participating in the

“Katie took stewardship to heart. When asked, Katie would give 100 percent. She truly lives the stewardship way of life because she loves Christ wholeheartedly and remains His dedicated disciple.” – Margaret Kendall



ward Sainthood r Katie Fontaine

Special Olympics in Australia this year. You would think it was Katie herself who was going to Australia.”

Katie has also maintained an active role here at St. John’s for nearly half a century. She was actively involved in St. Anthony’s Circle group back when the women’s circles functioned in the church. She looked forward to regularly visiting and praying with hospital patients and nursing home residents. Katie was also a member of the Funeral Ministry and belonged to the choir for many years. Outside of the parish itself, Katie has treasured her membership in the Franciscan Associate Program, which is devoted to making the presence of Jesus more deeply experienced in our world today through both prayer and acts of service.

“Katie would always say, ‘My Catholic faith is everything to me,’” Margaret says. “When I would visit her and suggest we might pray, Katie would immediately

start with spontaneous prayer. I marveled at her humble words as she prayed.”

Last December, Katie suffered a stroke just before Christmas. After receiving medical care and therapy at Trinity Nursing Home for some time, Katie’s children felt that it was best for her to move closer to family, and she was relocated to her new home in Rogers, N.D. Yet, although Katie is no longer in our midst, she leaves her mark behind with us through each of her students and the countless lives she has touched during her time here at St. John’s. She inspires us to continue following her example of love and compassion.

“Katie’s Irish spirit, her open, loving heart, and her genuine love for all of God’s people continue to impact my spiritual life,” Clarine says. “Through all the trials of life, Katie has continued to grow – she has learned how to smile, laugh, and hang on to hope in all things.”

“A Focused Approach to Prayer” continued from front cover

for our earthly bride and joining our sufferings to Christ’s, we intercede for grace for our brides. At the same time, our act of bodily love in union with Christ accelerates our own conversion. By making this sacrifice for the women in our lives, we live out the essence of the Gospel through a very particular act of self-denial. To lay down one’s body out of love for another is the central message of the Gospel. In addition to fasting, I also pray the Rosary three times on that day.”

For single men in the ministry, their fast may be dedicated to their future bride. For widowers or those unlikely to get married, the beneficiary of their fasts may be for a daughter, a sister, or a granddaughter, and for those whose faith believes in the need – their deceased wife, or any other women in great need. For the consecrated celibate man, the benefit of their fast can be for the benefit of the community they serve or for consecrated celibate women.

When e5 Men founder Steve Habisohn was asked for an expanded explanation of his motivation, he responded, “In Ephesians 5, St. Paul calls on men to ‘love their wives as Christ loved the Church.’ He calls on men to be like Christ to their brides. Besides the fact that Christ fasted, even more importantly, Christ gave His very body up for His bride, the Church, on the cross. This idea of a groom giving his body for his bride is a basic tenant of married love.”

If you would like more information on e5 Men, or to get involved, please contact Mike Labonte at 701-837-1714 or ndlabontes@min.midco.net.



St. Isidore's Simple Stewardship

When we consider the lives of the saints, the first that usually come to mind are more than likely classed into four categories – martyrs, priests, religious, and great miracle workers. St. Isidore was none of these, and yet he is revered in Spain as one of “the five saints,” which include St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis Xavier, and St. Philip Neri, all of whom were canonized with him in the same year. His Feast Day is May 15.

The life of St. Isidore is a great testimony to how, with God’s grace, we can take the occurrences of a simple, mundane, and even sometimes difficult life and use them as opportunities for sanctification.

Isidore was born near Madrid, around the year 1070, into a peasant family. While still a young boy, he began working as a day laborer on the farm of Juan de Vergas, a wealthy landowner, just outside of Madrid.

Despite the hard work on Vergas’ farm, where Isidore spent the rest of his life in service, he did not complain and always tried his hardest to meet the tasks requested of him. Above all things, he upheld his relationship with Jesus. As he walked behind his plough, he would talk to God, offering up his work as a prayer. He rose up extra early each day before work to attend daily Mass. He would even spend his vacations touring the different churches of Madrid and the surrounding areas.

As hardworking as Isidore was, his fellow workers complained to Vergas that the pious laborer always arrived late for work because he attended Mass every day. Isidore could not deny the accusation, but assured his employer that he always made a special effort to compensate for the extra minutes he spent in prayer. One day, Vergas decided to see for himself whether Isidore was really slacking in his work. Hiding in the bushes, he watched as Isidore came out of church, went directly to the fields, and began his plowing. To Vergas’ astonishment, he saw a “man” with another plow beside Isidore, driving a team of white oxen. When he ran toward the mysterious team, it disappeared and Isidore only looked puzzled when Vergas asked him about it. “Sir, I work alone and know of none save God to whom I look for strength,” Isidore said. No doubt, God had sent His angels to help ensure that



Isidore’s work would not suffer because of his placing the spiritual above the temporal.

While working for Vergas, Isidore fell in love with and married a young woman, Maria Torribia, who shared his devotion and faith. They had one child, a son, who died while still a boy. A model of sanctity herself, Maria – also a canonized saint – served her husband faithfully all her life. Together, Isidore and Maria would look for ways to serve the poor, even though they had very little themselves. One story says that when Isidore brought a number of hungry people home with him one day, Maria realized as she scraped the bottom of the pot that there was no more stew. Isidore asked her to check one more time, and she was able to spoon out enough to feed everyone. They could not refuse an act of kindness to anyone.

At times, we might be tempted to think that we do not have the talents or the assets to be good stewards. But St. Isidore shows us by his simple, humble example that we can live out the call to discipleship in the smallest actions of charity and piety – that we only need do as much as we can, and trust that God will do the rest.

Lectors Ministry

God Speaks to His People

As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* notes, proclaiming the Word during the liturgy goes beyond reading a book: “When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God Himself speaks to His people, and Christ, present in His Word, proclaims the Gospel” (29).

Serving as a lector, then, is a very important task, for a lector serves as God’s instrument as He speaks to His people.

Clarine Sandstrom, the current head of our Lectors Ministry, has served our parish as a lector for ten years now. It is this element of bringing God’s Word to His people that she finds to be particularly rewarding.

“Being a conduit of God’s abiding Presence and a steward of His Holy Word is humbling,” Clarine says. “It deepens one’s faith and belief in what is true! I believe serving as a lector naturally draws one closer to God through His Real Presence and Communion.”

Lori Burbach, who has served as a lector for 12 years here at St. John, echoes that sentiment.

“Being able to work to clearly communicate the message of the readings each time I serve has been a wonderful blessing,” Lori says. “Being a lector has given me the opportunity to grow closer to Christ through the Word, to gain a greater appreciation and love of the Scriptures as the Word of God, and to help others draw closer to God through my clear and proper proclamation of the readings.”

Indeed, the 37 lectors who serve us here at St. John do an impeccable job proclaiming God’s Word in such a way that it is clear that it is God who is speaking to us. They take time out of their busy schedules to train for the ministry, and then to prepare their hearts and minds each time they are scheduled

to serve. It is a sacred ministry, and our parish lectors see it as such.

“A lector comes to understand that he or she is performing a real ministry of presence,” Clarine says. “They are aware that bringing forth the Lord’s

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– Lori Burbach





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2600 Central Ave. West
Minot, ND 58701
701-839-7076
www.stjohnminot.com

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

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

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Lectors Ministry

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Presence through proclaiming His Word is their job as servants and stewards of God's Holy Word."

"I do my best to prepare well," Lori says. "I want to make sure that I understand the message of that week's readings so that I can clearly communicate it as I'm reading. It is my job as a lector to portray the message of the reading through the way in which I read it."

We are indeed blessed that our Lectors Ministry is full of stewards who are eager to serve and serve well, and their commitment shows forth in the incredible job that they do.

"Our parish always welcomes more parishioners who want to serve as lectors," Clarine says. "We especially encourage new lectors coming forward to serve at daily Mass. Think about it!"

If you would like to join our lectors in this ministry, please contact Clarine Sandstrom at 701-390-4286 or csandstrom@srt.com.

