

PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM IS BRAINCHILD OF THE AMAZING PARISH CONFERENCE

“**F**antastic, authentic and down to earth” are some of the words used to describe the Amazing Parish Conference attended by parish secretary Denise Spelic, Patty Harris of Sacred Heart, Paul Nordhues of St. Theresa, Janelle Pritchard of St. Michael, Fr. Antony and Fr. Vijumon Choorackal in Cincinnati, Ohio in May.

The group, which has now formed a Leadership Team, attended a three-day conference to learn more about the Amazing Parish program. The diocese paid part of the expense for the group to attend. This program includes three building blocks, which help lay the groundwork — these are “a reliance on prayer and the sacraments,” “a commitment to a healthy organization” and “a passion for evangelization and discipleship.”

The website states, “Amazing Parish exists to revitalize



(From left) Fr. Vijumon Choorackal, Fr. Antony Thekkekara, Paul Nordhues, Janelle Pritchard, Denise Spelic and Patty Harris. All trained for the Amazing Parish program in May.

the Church by equipping her pastors and leaders with the training, resources and support they need to create vibrant and thriving parishes.”

The Leadership Team recently established this mission statement: “We, the Families in Faith Parish Leadership Team, strive to bring Christ to people

and people to Christ through a culture of prayer, healthy teamwork and active discipleship.”

Our Families in Faith team was joined by more than 1,000 people for the Amazing Parish conference.

“There were fantastic speakers,” Patty says. “They gave us a lot of enthusiasm.”

THE AMAZING PARISH CONFERENCE *continued from front cover*

“The speakers were authentic and down to earth,” Denise says.

So, based on this program and formation of the leadership team, what changes will we see?

Fr. Antony and the entire team want parishioners to know this team is not meant to replace the Parish Council or to start making decisions in the parishes. The Leadership Team serves as another group support for Fr. Antony and to be a safe space where he can share his joys and trials.

“If Fr. Antony had an issue to talk to someone about, he can talk to us and know it is safe — it won’t go being spread through the whole parish,” Patty says. “This is what we are supposed to do. We help him think through things and come to a better understanding of which way he should go with it.”

The group was selected by Fr. Antony to include a person from each church and Denise as secretary.

To better explain the Leadership Team’s role, Denise says they liken the priest to a sheriff.

“We are the deputies,” Denise says. “It’s to help him carry on his vision of the church and parish.”

Part of the goal of Amazing Parish is to help a parish run better, which often means more participation from lay people.

“One of the misconceptions is a priest needs to be involved in everything at a parish,” Janelle says. “Lay people can help with day-to-day activities at the parish.”

For now, the team is focusing on the three building blocks.

“They gave us a model and there’s lots of information to build into that model,” Patty says. “We need to work our way through and apply our own personalities and make it work. It has a real structure to it. It starts with prayer and meeting regularly. We are required to become a cohesive leadership team.”

Similar to before, parishioners may contact the Parish Council with questions, comments and concerns. But, they should also feel welcome to discuss concerns with the leadership team members.

“One of the important things is that we are in charge of our own parish,” Paul says. “We bring things up to Father that are coming up in our communities.”

“We are here to say, ‘That’s a great idea, Father’ or ‘I’m not sure that’s going to work and this is why we think so,’” Denise says.

Patty emphasizes prayer as the first building block of the program and how important it is to the parish success.

“We devote a certain amount of time, when we meet, to prayer,” she says. “The time we meet is a convenient time for adoration, so we often go during our hour-and-30-minute meeting.”

As for the future for the Leadership Team, they hope to provide an example for their fellow parishioners and help bring everyone they encounter closer to God.

“Our big takeaway is we are striving to bring souls to Christ,” Denise says. “We help make Christ real for others.”

“We just want to inspire people to have a relationship with Jesus,” Janelle says. “We want to take ownership in the faith journey.”



The Amazing Parish Leadership Team gathered with two priest friends of Fr. Antony from the diocese of Columbus, Ohio during the May conference in Cincinnati, Ohio.

A Letter From Our Pastor

GETTING OUR PRIORITIES IN ORDER

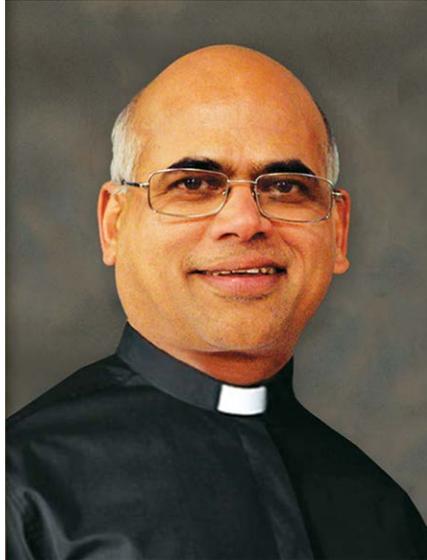
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I know that many people are not on a school year calendar. But for many of us, September brings a livelier rhythm to our schedules. Life just seems to get busier after Labor Day. Therefore, this month seems to be a good time to think about our priorities and to pray for God's guidance.

It has been said that the truly important is often pushed aside by the merely urgent. So, as you review your priorities, please make sure that you include what's really important!

First of all, be sure to include time for God, as well as for job, family and recreation. Of prime importance, make sure that Mass on Sundays is a top priority — that's the most important event of the week. In addition, reserve some time for personal Scripture study, as well as prayer with your family or a prayer group — then incorporate that into your daily and weekly routine.

There are many forces pulling at us as we decide where to use our talents. For most of us, our jobs claim the lion's share of our efforts and sometimes threaten to engulf our whole lives. We also have responsibilities to our families and legitimate calls for service to the community — that obviously includes the Church. We have lots of areas for service right here in our own parish — religious education, music, hospitality ministry, or



any one of the many ministries in which you may use your talents to grow closer to God.

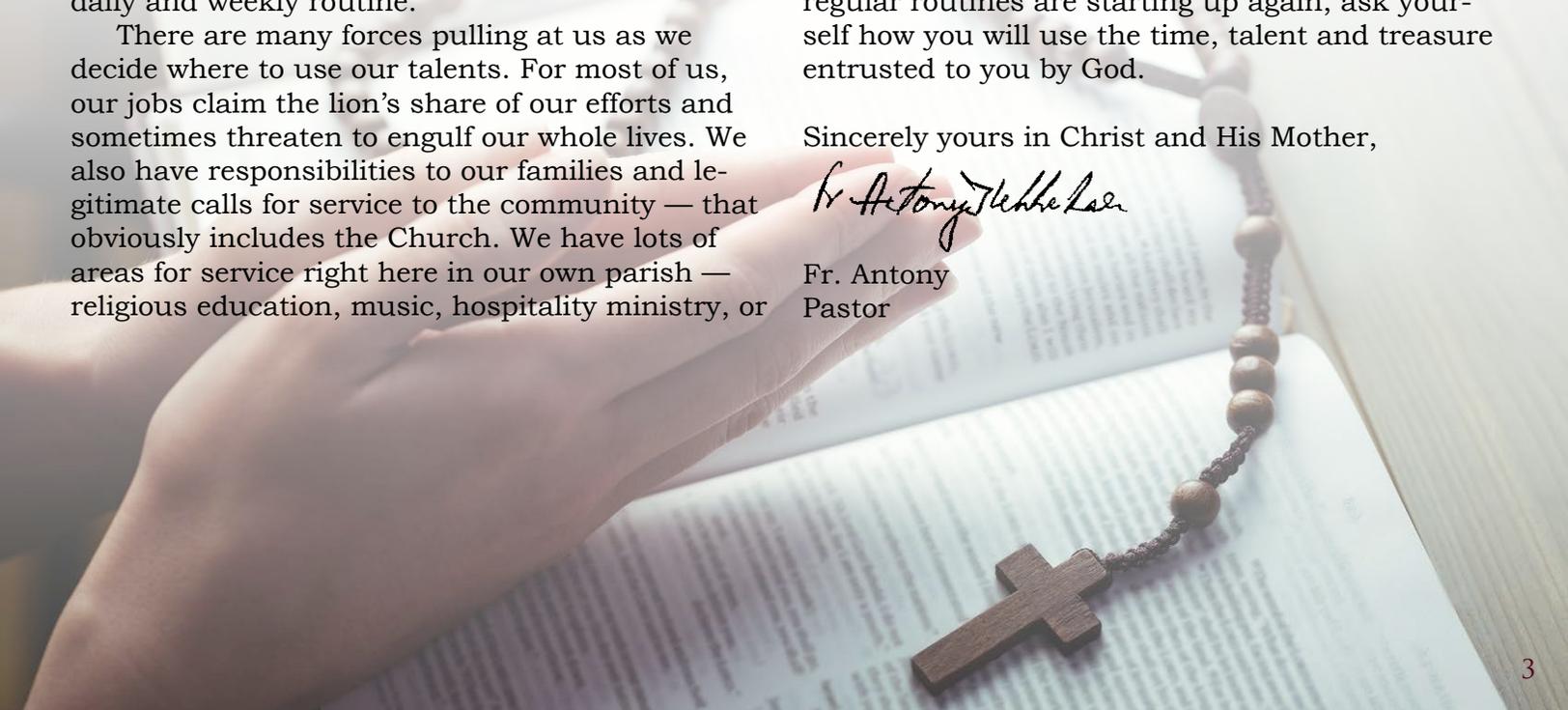
Finally, we have to set priorities for using our money. As Christians, we are responsible to God for the use of the financial resources He has entrusted to us — no matter if it's a lot or a little — and to make a return to God in thanksgiving. In this regard, Scripture gives us the tithe as a goal. Working toward a tithe may mean some changes in your priorities, but I can tell you from personal experience that those who have adopted this as their

standard of giving, experience a joy rooted in the spiritual growth that occurs as we continually live out the "three Ts" of stewardship — time, talent and treasure.

Priorities are certainly a part of life. As you review your own priorities, especially now that many regular routines are starting up again, ask yourself how you will use the time, talent and treasure entrusted to you by God.

Sincerely yours in Christ and His Mother,

Fr. Antony
Pastor



SCHOOL BOARD, ENDOWMENT BOARD, BOOSTER CLUB WORK TO SU

Just like it takes many parts to make a body run (1 Corinthians 12:12), so it does to run Spalding Academy. That's where the School Board, Endowment Board and Booster Club come in.

The PreK-12 school located in Spalding is one of a few in the Diocese of Grand Island that serves students through all grades from pre-school to high school. It is also the only high school in Spalding. The school currently serves about 90 students and has a mission to "generate an educational climate where children are formed in the Catholic Christian Faith." Administration strives to "promote Gospel values" to "enable every student to grow spiritually and develop as a responsible member of the Church and society."

In September, Endowment Board member and Booster Club Chair Dennis Bauer and his wife, Linda, will see the last of their five children step through the doors for senior year at Spalding Academy. School Board President Tim Esch and his wife, Yvonne, will also see the last of their six children embark on senior year.

"It means a lot to have put our kids through this school," Dennis says. "I love that the school combines faith with everyday teaching."

"It's important to educate our children with a Catholic education," Tim says. "There's so much to draw us off from our faith these days."



Students gather outside Spalding Academy, which is a PreK to 12 school and the only high school located in Spalding.

For more than 100 years, Spalding Academy has seen many children walk in and out of the doors for Catholic education. Some students even come from outside Spalding to attend the school.

Running and maintaining a private school is

continued on page 5

"It takes people's time, talent and treasure to pull this school together and make this all work. We hope our example flows through the children and makes them the same type of stewards for our parish." — Dennis Bauer



OWMENT BOARD AND UPPORT SPALDING ACADEMY

an expensive venture, and the Booster Club exists to supplement teacher salaries, buy books or react to needs of the school or individual classes.

“About 90 percent of the money goes to fund education and about 10 percent goes toward athletics,” Dennis says. “It’s another source of income to provide for the school.”

The event that generates money for the Booster Club is the annual Spalding Academy Kickoff, held around the start of the school year. The event generates about \$120,000 that includes sponsorships from area businesses and individuals. The Club has a goal for future years to raise \$200,000.

“Local businesses pitch in to support the school,” Dennis says. “We have businesses as far away as Grand Island that donate.”

Unlike the Booster Club, the Endowment Board members don’t hold a formal fundraiser. They collect money to create funds in honor of people, through estates or to continue a family’s legacy. The money is then invested. The current endowment is valued at over \$2 million and a portion of the income from the endowment earnings is donated to the school each year.

“A minimum of \$5,000 is needed to start a fund and it can be continually added to,” Dennis says. “The endowment is the heart of the school when it comes to support.”

The School Board is the glue that holds the school together. They keep the school running, weighing in and pitching in on everything from building repairs and fundraising projects to staffing decisions.

“It’s a community,” Tim says. “Sometimes when there is a ceiling or wall to be fixed, we will get five, six or 10 of us together in the summer to tear it down and get it done.”

Tim isn’t sure how long he has been serving

in the School Board president role but says he has been on the School Board for close to 20 years. His ancestors have been in Spalding for more than 150 years. Tim’s father, Tim and his nine siblings all graduated from Spalding Academy. For them, the school is a family affair and Tim takes pride in the education provided to students.

“I think it’s important to keep Spalding Academy going to keep this community viable,” he says. “This is a great community to work with and so is the school alumni.”

All of the work being done by many volunteers keeps Spalding Academy running and prepares the school for continued success.

“It takes people’s time, talent and treasure to pull this school together and make this all work,” Dennis says. “We hope our example flows through the children and makes them the same type of stewards for our parish.”

For Dennis and Tim, giving back to the school means a lot to them, as it holds a special place in their hearts.

“It’s a pleasure to do this and it’s part of giving back,” Dennis says. “Our ancestors sacrificed a lot to give us this and it’s our job to take care of it.”

To learn more about the Endowment Board or to get involved, please contact Mark Carraher at 308-497-2773. To get involved with the Booster Club or to help with the Kickoff event, please contact Dennis Bauer at 308-370-1424. To get involved with the School Board or to learn more, please contact Tim Esch at 308-750-1203.

Questions and Answers About Our Annual Stewardship Renewal



Our annual Stewardship Renewal is the time when we ask each other to re-prioritize the way we use God’s gifts in the Church. Every parish family will receive a “Stewardship Package” in the mail that includes a booklet that describes every ministry in the parish, as well as your Commitment Card.

Commitment Weekend is Oct. 12-13 — please be sure to bring your Commitment Card to Mass!

I feel like my life is already too full with family and work obligations. I barely even have time to relax. How can I possibly share my time and talents in our faith community?

We all have many obligations to our families, jobs, schools, and other endeavors. The issue is not how much time we have, but how we prioritize that time.

Before you fill out your Commitment Card, take some time to reflect on your priorities, and where God fits into your day-to-day life. Remember, living as true stewards of God’s gifts involves giving back the first fruits of what He has given to us in thanksgiving, not the “leftovers.”

I am happy with my current level of parish participation. Why do I need to keep filling out a Commitment Card every year?

As part of the renewal process, it is important that we consider our current level of participation in parish life. Sometimes, the call to stewardship involves the quality of service in addition to its quantity. In looking through the opportunities for ministry available at the parish, you may find yourself drawn to a new ministry you haven’t tried before, or new ways

to share of your time with God to enrich and enlighten your prayer life. So, even though your current level of parish participation might not change drastically, the ways in which you participate may evolve as you grow in living the stewardship way of life.

Even if you end up continuing to participate in the exact same ministries as you have in the past, marking and turning in a Commitment Card means you have reviewed your present ministries and re-committed yourself to them.

I’m not very active in the Church and, frankly, feel like it may be too late to get involved. Why should I fill out a Commitment Card?

It’s never too late to renew your faith life, and filling out a Commitment Card is a simple step through which you can immediately re-enter the life of the parish. Our parish community is not here to judge you, but to welcome and nourish you in your faith journey. Begin by checking the box that says, “Attend weekly Mass and Holy Days of Obligation,” and take some time to discern additional ways in which God is calling you from that starting point.

I’m physically unable to attend Mass or be active in parish life. Is there any reason for me to submit a Commitment Card?

Of course! Your prayers are just as important to the success of our parish community in carrying out its mission as ministry participation and financial contributions. Take a moment to look over some of the opportunities to spend quiet time with God listed in the “Stewardship of Time” section of the Commitment Card, and take a step towards growing in your relationship with Christ and His Church.

SERVING AS “FATHER’S HELPERS” THROUGH THE MEN’S CLUB

When a fire devastated St. Michael’s in 2012, many men came forward to help with the reconstruction of the church. The overwhelming response physically demonstrated our faith community’s deep commitment to service.

“The attitude of service has been strong with the men of St. Michael’s,” says Matt Glesinger. “It has been passed down through the generations. When the men get together to serve the church and one another, it strengthens their bonds with each other, their families and with Christ.”

The Men’s Club consists of all the adult men of St. Michael’s Parish, and it began in the early 1950s when Fr. Fullam organized the men of the parish to assist with tasks around the church and school.

“The men of the parish had always done service work, but they weren’t as organized as the ladies’ group that served the parish in many ways,” Matt says. “In the early 1970s, the construction of the parish



The Men’s Club rallies to help the parish after the fire of 2012.

center was a perfect opportunity for the men of the parish to reorganize their group.”

The men of the parish were organized into teams with team captains leading them, and these teams were led by a President and Secretary/Treasurer. Over the years, the organizational structure has remained the same and provided a way to “rally the troops” in emergency situations, such as the fire of 2012.

“The captains, some who have volunteered for years, are the main men who get things done,” says Matt, President. “Our longtime Secretary/Treasurer, Duane ‘Boots’ Seamann, does a tremendous job keeping the books and the roster of active members. As men retire, young men and new parishioners fill in the gaps.”

At the beginning of each year, the eight captains and

continued on back cover

“The attitude of service has been strong with the men of St. Michael’s. It has been passed down through the generations. When the men get together to serve the church and one another, it strengthens their bonds with each other, their families and with Christ.” — *Matt Glesinger*

Non-profit organization
US Postage
PAID
Permit # 32993
Spalding, NE 68665

FAMILIES IN FAITH

150 W. Marguerite St. | P.O. Box 310
Spalding, NE 68665 | 308.497.2662
www.families-infaith.com

Return Service Requested

THE MEN'S CLUB *continued from page 7*

their teams are given their assignments. Some activities the Men's Club regularly assists with are building maintenance, cleaning after extracurricular activities for Spalding Academy, preparing the fields for football games, and setting up for funeral dinners and other parish activities.

For Matt, the Men's Club exists as one of many avenues to serve God and our community, and we serve Him by loving and serving others.

"Jesus measured greatness in terms of service, not status," Matt says. "There is something

about service to God and to others that gives a person a feeling of completeness. We learn that by serving others, we become happier because of God's blessings."

Consider becoming active with the Men's Club, for by serving the parish community, we "continue the legacy established

by those who came before us."

"I look back at the initial construction of our beautiful church and think about those who gave their time, talent and treasure to build this magnificent building," Matt says. "Over the years those men served our parish, and we continue to do so today."

If you would like more information about the Men's Club, please reach out to Matt Glesinger at mglesinger@gpcom.net or 308-390-8995.

MASS SCHEDULE:

7 p.m. Saturday - St. Michael in Spalding | **7 a.m. Sunday** - St. Michael in Spalding
9 a.m. Sunday - Sacred Heart in Greeley | **11 a.m. Sunday** - St. Theresa in Ericson