

## ST. MICHAEL'S AUCTION OFFERS A WONDERFUL FELLOWSHIP TRADITION

It's become a longstanding tradition at St. Michael's Parish, and with good reason — the St. Michael's Auction provides a chance for parishioners of all ages to come together in stewardship and a day of fun and fellowship.

This year, the auction is slated for Sunday, Nov. 10 at the Dominican Center. It is customary to attend the 11 a.m. Mass, then head to the Parish Center for a roast beef dinner served by women of the parish. After the meal, everyone gets down to the business of the auction — with both live and silent items up for bid. The proceeds of the day go to the parish general fund.

"It's a great way for the community to come together and be grateful for our blessings," says Mike Mahony, who assists with the auction. "I really want to acknowledge those who run the auction. There's Charles Mahony, Dan McManaman and Denny McKay, who have been involved since it started. There are many others who work on the auction, but these are the ones who have been there for a long time."

The auction provides a way for everyone to live out stewardship, offering their time, talent and treasure.

"A lot of people there do all three," Mike says. "There are a lot of generous people who take part."





# STEWARDSHIP

## THE CHURCH IS MORE THAN A BUILDING — IT IS OUR SPIRITUAL HOME

**W**here do you go to church? We've all answered that question hundreds of times before. But have you ever stopped to think about what it truly means?

Whether you attend St. Theresa's, St. Michael's or Sacred Heart, we do "go to" the church to celebrate Mass together. But as Catholics and as stewards of God's gifts, the Church is much more than a building within which we worship. The Church, as we understand it, is the universal body of believers, the society that Christ established to help us grow in holiness, to bring us closer to Him through the giving of our time, talent, and treasure, and to lead the world to the truth.

Before Jesus ascended to the Father, He commissioned the disciples, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19-20). That is the Church's mission in the world today — to make disciples of all nations, to bring all men to Christ.

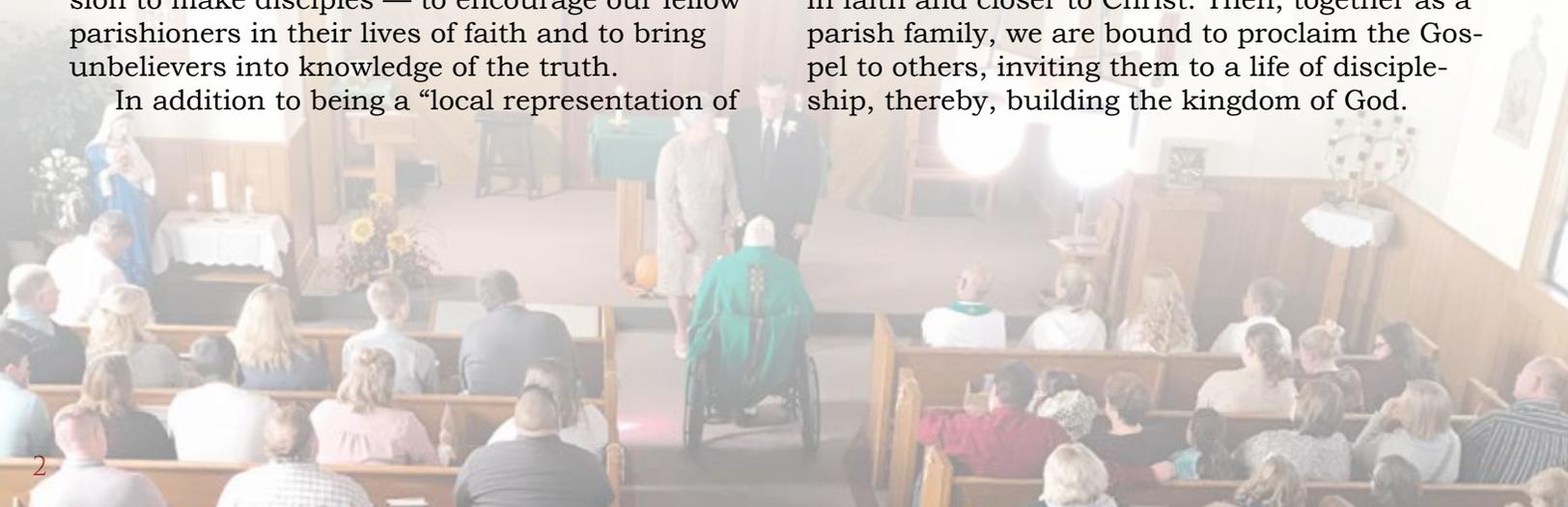
Our parish plays a key part in that. As members of our parish, we are local representatives of the universal Church. Together, as members of this parish family, we work to carry out the Church's mission on a local level. We worship the Lord at Mass, offering Him our praise and thanksgiving, and then we go forth on a mission to make disciples — to encourage our fellow parishioners in their lives of faith and to bring unbelievers into knowledge of the truth.

In addition to being a "local representation of

the universal Church," the parish is much like a family. We are communal beings, and we are created to live with others. So, as Catholics, we are members of the Church and, on a more immediate level, of the parish. As such, we gather together for the Eucharistic meal and we grow in faith together throughout the week, supporting one another through our participation in many parish ministries, through prayer, and through the friendships that many of us share.

In a letter written to parish priests throughout the nation, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops explained the important place of the parish in the lives of Catholic faithful: "The parish is a privileged place to announce the Word of God. It includes a variety of forms and each of the faithful is called to take an active part, especially with the witness of a Christian life and the explicit proclamation of the Gospel to non-believers to lead them to the faith, or to believers to instruct them, confirm them and encourage them to a more fervent life."

So, we ought to feel truly blessed to be a part of this parish family. We ought to make a conscious effort to be actively involved, to build relationships with our fellow parishioners and to celebrate the Mass together as often as possible — most especially every Sunday. We are then bound to grow closer to others, to grow deeper in faith and closer to Christ. Then, together as a parish family, we are bound to proclaim the Gospel to others, inviting them to a life of discipleship, thereby, building the kingdom of God.



*A Letter From Our Pastor*

# A MONTH FILLED WITH GRATITUDE

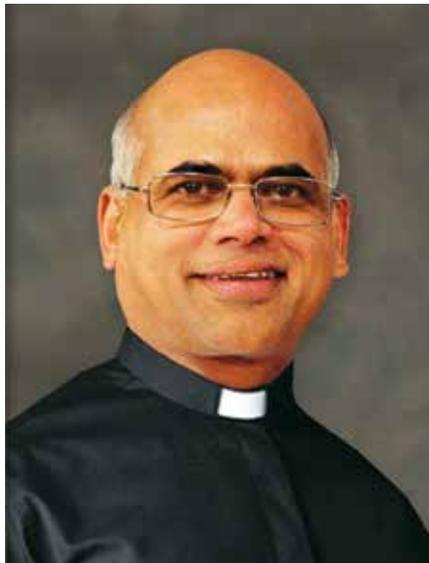
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The month of November of course brings to mind thoughts of thanksgiving. These aren't just thoughts about Thanksgiving Day — although I look forward to it with happy anticipation — but thoughts regarding the many reasons we should be thankful.

We begin the month with a Holy Day of Obligation, the Solemnity of All Saints, on Nov. 1. It is a stewardship feast in so many ways, instituted to honor all saints, known and unknown. The communion of saints — the sharing of spiritual goods by those in heaven to us who are still in our pilgrimage — is a great cause for thanksgiving. We read about the lives of the saints to be encouraged and inspired by their examples. Plus, we are strengthened by their fellowship in the Body of Christ, and their prayers aid us.

We follow All Saints' Day with All Souls Day on Nov. 2 so we can honor and commemorate all those others who may have been "saints" in our lives. It may have been a mother or father, sister or brother, son or daughter, next-door neighbor, good friend, grandparent, uncle or aunt, cousin, teacher, or student — the list is endless. We have been blessed in our lives with people who have shown us what it means to be a good Christian, what it means to be a good steward. During this month of November, we need to thank God for those people in our lives. In fact, we need to thank God period, which is another important element of this month.

Toward the end of the month we celebrate what is mainly a secular holiday, Thanksgiving, but this national holiday is so grounded in our Christian stewardship tradition. This year is the 156<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first official



Thanksgiving in the U.S., as proclaimed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, during the horrors of the Civil War. In the beginning of that proclamation, President Lincoln stated, *"To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God."* Lincoln takes great care to

recognize God's presence in all of the "thanks."

Couldn't we say those words of Lincoln about our lives, about the life of our parish this year? In fact, we could say it every month. Stewardship is the appreciation of our many, many blessings, both personally and as a faith family.

From the beginning of the month, when we thank God for the example of the saints and for the example of the "saints" in our lives, to the end of the month, when we thank God for basically everything we have and everything we are, November is a time to remember and to approach the Lord with a grateful heart. That is what stewardship really is — approaching God; approaching each day; approaching all those with whom we come in contact — with grateful and loving hearts.

Sincerely yours in Christ and His Mother,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Antony Stehler". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Fr. Antony  
Pastor

# The Woods

## BUILDING ON A FOUNDATION

As Catholics, we are given many reminders of the great role stewardship plays in the building of Christ's kingdom right here on earth — whether through the service of our fellow parishioners, the Church's efforts to carry out the works of mercy, or examples given in Scripture. And as parishioners Tony and Julia Wood know well, the examples we set of an active faith life today will have a lasting impact on generations to come.

Both Tony and Julia were raised by parents who provided strong examples of faith in action. Tony's parents, Bob Wood and Mary Bauer, have been involved in parish life at Sacred Heart for as long as he can remember. And Julia has similar memories of her parents' active participation in their Methodist church. When Tony and Julia wed in 2011 — shortly after Julia entered the Catholic Church — they both knew that raising their own children to serve God and His people would be an integral part of life together.

Today, the Woods stay active in parish life at Sacred Heart in various ways. Julia serves on the Parish Council, the Stewardship Council and the Church Environment Ministry. She also teaches CCD classes. In addition to supporting Julia's involvement, Tony often pitches in to help the Men's Group with snow removal and other hands-on tasks around the parish.

With three young children at home — Kain, 5; Andrea, 4; and Larkin, 18 months — family life can certainly get hectic at times. It is not always easy to make the time to serve, but the Woods find that the rewards of parish involvement and the ways in which stewardship enables them to connect with fellow parishioners are well worth the sacrifice.

"Balancing and making time for the community, the church, and also the home is important," Julia says. "I think it is about setting priorities. Our priorities are driven by our children because we want to set that example



*The Wood family — Tony and Julia with their children, Andrea (left), Larkin (right) and Kain (center).*

that yes, we are busy, but there is also time to serve. And when we serve those ministries, they benefit us far more than we benefit them."

Knowing the importance of raising their children in a nurturing faith environment, the Woods are grateful for Sacred Heart's supportive and welcoming community. In addition to the inspiring models of service they witness in their fellow parishioners, they are also blessed to have many members of their extended family take part in parish life as well.

"We have a lot of family in Greeley, so our kids get to see their grandparents, aunts, uncles



# *Family:* ON OF FAITH AND SERVICE

and cousins at Mass, which shows them the importance of faith,” Julia says. “A lot of these people also play important roles in the Mass and volunteer a lot of time, so I feel like our kids have a growing opportunity to follow in good footsteps.”

The Woods are thankful for the many positive role models in their children’s lives. At the same time, they realize that, as parents, their own example is often the most powerful of all.

“With the church being such a big part of our family life, I just hope we are able to lead our kids as we were led by our parents,” Tony says. “It is something I look forward to doing, and hopefully I will do as good a job as my parents did!”

For both Tony and Julia, building upon

the firm foundation in the faith that their own parents gave them has become the cornerstone of their life together. As they actively worship and serve in our parish, they pray that their own children will one day continue the tradition of giving back to the Lord in thanksgiving for His many blessings.

“I just hope that, as young adults, our children understand the sacrifices that Christ made for us and continue to give back to the Church, and that they remember the volunteering and the services we can provide,” Julia says. “That’s how Tony and I were both raised — our parents were really able to pass that down to us, and we hope to do the same with our own children.”

## ST. MICHAEL’S AUCTION *continued from front cover*

The younger set can enjoy the games set up for them during the auction, and older students provide babysitting.

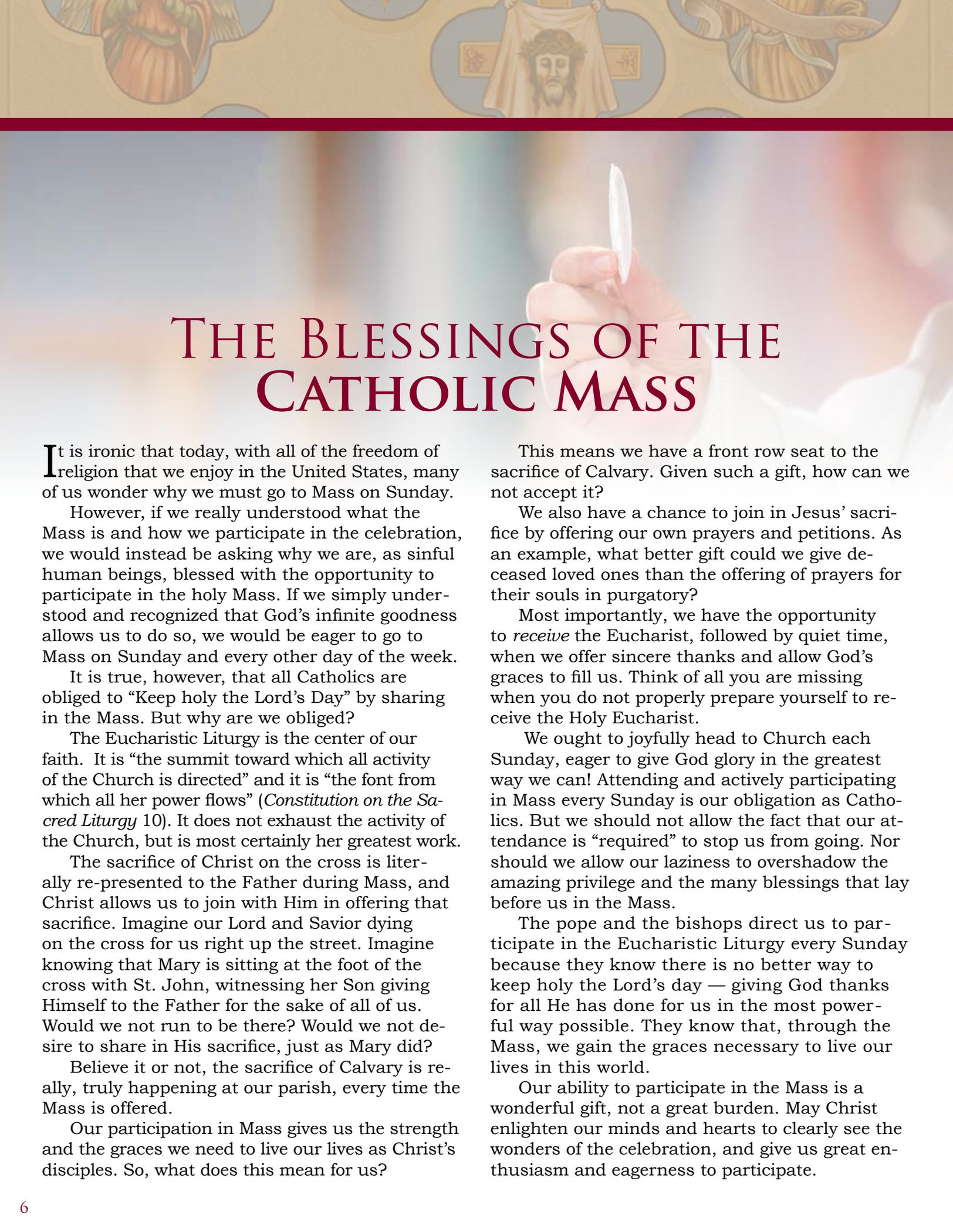
During the live auction, there are typically the “big ticket” items up for bidding. Parishioners and local businesses donate items such as a whole processed beef, a truckload of rock and gravel, four Husker tickets or space to graze cows.

Besides the live auction, there are also smaller items up for bidding during the silent auction. A number of gift baskets are available for bidding, as well.

“There is everything, from small to big,” Mike says. “It’s a great day to bring the family, you can go to Mass and have a fun day. There’s a good meal, friendship and fellowship. The kids can enjoy some games and the adults can visit, too.”

*“There is everything, from small to big. It’s a great day to bring the family, you can go to Mass and have a fun day. There’s a good meal, friendship and fellowship. The kids can enjoy some games and the adults can visit, too.” — Mike Mahony*

*Donations of big and small auction items are being accepted — if you would like to donate, please call the parish office at 308-497-2662.*

The background of the page features a blurred image of a hand holding a white host. Above this, there are several circular religious icons: on the left, an angel; in the center, a portrait of Jesus Christ; and on the right, another angel. The overall color palette is warm, with gold and red tones.

# THE BLESSINGS OF THE CATHOLIC MASS

It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States, many of us wonder why we must go to Mass on Sunday.

However, if we really understood what the Mass is and how we participate in the celebration, we would instead be asking why we are, as sinful human beings, blessed with the opportunity to participate in the holy Mass. If we simply understood and recognized that God's infinite goodness allows us to do so, we would be eager to go to Mass on Sunday and every other day of the week.

It is true, however, that all Catholics are obliged to "Keep holy the Lord's Day" by sharing in the Mass. But why are we obliged?

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the center of our faith. It is "the summit toward which all activity of the Church is directed" and it is "the font from which all her power flows" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 10). It does not exhaust the activity of the Church, but is most certainly her greatest work.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is literally re-presented to the Father during Mass, and Christ allows us to join with Him in offering that sacrifice. Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

Believe it or not, the sacrifice of Calvary is really, truly happening at our parish, every time the Mass is offered.

Our participation in Mass gives us the strength and the graces we need to live our lives as Christ's disciples. So, what does this mean for us?

This means we have a front row seat to the sacrifice of Calvary. Given such a gift, how can we not accept it?

We also have a chance to join in Jesus' sacrifice by offering our own prayers and petitions. As an example, what better gift could we give deceased loved ones than the offering of prayers for their souls in purgatory?

Most importantly, we have the opportunity to *receive* the Eucharist, followed by quiet time, when we offer sincere thanks and allow God's graces to fill us. Think of all you are missing when you do not properly prepare yourself to receive the Holy Eucharist.

We ought to joyfully head to Church each Sunday, eager to give God glory in the greatest way we can! Attending and actively participating in Mass every Sunday is our obligation as Catholics. But we should not allow the fact that our attendance is "required" to stop us from going. Nor should we allow our laziness to overshadow the amazing privilege and the many blessings that lay before us in the Mass.

The pope and the bishops direct us to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy every Sunday because they know there is no better way to keep holy the Lord's day — giving God thanks for all He has done for us in the most powerful way possible. They know that, through the Mass, we gain the graces necessary to live our lives in this world.

Our ability to participate in the Mass is a wonderful gift, not a great burden. May Christ enlighten our minds and hearts to clearly see the wonders of the celebration, and give us great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate.

# PARISH MUSICIANS PREPARE TO SHARE THEIR GIFTS DURING THE *Advent and Christmas Seasons*

**F**or Barb Anderson, playing music at St. Theresa's in Ericson runs in the family — from her mom to her sister to her. Now, Barb makes the Mass more beautiful and prayerful with her guitar and organ talents.

When it comes to Christmas, Barb appreciates that, since St. Theresa's is such a small parish, people of all ages find their way to the choir loft to lend their vocal talent.

"A lot of times, grandchildren of parishioners come up and sing," Barb says. "I just love that because they look so cute in their Christmas clothing and it's great to hear them sing."

Maggie Smith also coordinates the music at St. Theresa. While there is no formal choir, a host of people offer their talent — from Barb's sister, Sharon, to Sister Mary and Joyce Bos.

At St. Michael's in Spalding, Joan Hooker has been involved in music ministry for about 12 years, playing the guitar and singing. Dan Walsh also serves in the music ministry role. Joan usually does the music for Christmas Eve, while Dan covers Christmas. Joan is sometimes joined by her grandchildren, lending their talents for the holiday.

"Singing is an outward expression of celebration, and Christmas is definitely something to celebrate," Joan says.

For both Joan and Barb, music is how they worship. Barb can't imagine Advent and Christmas without her favorite song, 'O Holy Night,' and Joan enjoys the 'Hallelujah.'

"I love how the music during Advent helps prepare you for the birth of Christ," Joan says.

"Without music at Mass, some people might be missing the opportunity they prefer to worship," Barb says. "Music gives everyone more of a chance to participate in the emotional aspect of Mass."

Both St. Theresa and St. Michael are packed with parishioners and visitors for Christmas, and Barb and Joan are sure to fill the church with beautiful



*(From left) Maggie Smith, Joyce Bos and Barb Anderson share their musical talents with St. Theresa.*



*Joan Hooker plays the guitar at St. Michael.*

Christmas hymns.

"I love the anticipation during Advent," Barb says. "At Christmas, we get to sing the 'Gloria' again. We watch the pink and purple candles be lit. I just

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## PARISH MUSICIANS

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love the joy people have in the Christmas season.”

Barb takes great care to songs that match the readings and Gospel, for Christmas and the rest of the year.

“I want the songs to help the parish be more responsive to what God is telling us,” Barb says.

Even without a formal choir, St. Theresa and St. Michael are sure to have a beautiful Advent and Christmas this year.

“At St. Theresa, the whole community is the choir,” Barb says. “We have a very strong parish.”

“I just always hope parishioners would enjoy the music, and maybe the words of the songs would speak personally to them,” Joan says. “Everybody is at a different level of spirituality.”

***“Without music at Mass, some people might be missing the opportunity they prefer to worship. Music gives everyone more of a chance to participate in the emotional aspect of Mass.”***

— Barb Anderson

*If you would like more information on getting involved in the Liturgy through music, please contact Mary Bauer at Sacred Heart, 308-428-5105; Joan Hooker at St. Michael, 308-750-4493; or Barb Anderson, 308-653-2116 or Maggie Smith, 402-416-9531 at St. Theresa.*

## MASS SCHEDULE:

**5 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