

## VOCATIONS MINISTRY:

*Engaged with the Holy Spirit, Supporting Religious Life*

A vocation is an intimate exchange between a person and God, but it impacts the entire faith community. It's widely known that the Catholic Church is facing a shortage of vocations — yet, rather than lamenting this, Families in Faith is bringing this question right back to its heart by nurturing our families and inviting in the Holy Spirit.

The Vocations Ministry serves all three parishes, but each parish has answered the call in its own way. The ministry was formalized about eight years ago and it brought some unity to the activities that were already in place to promote vocations. Deacon Ron Glaser of St. Michael remembers the simplicity with which the Vocations Ministry began.

“It was nothing big and fancy,” Deacon Ron says. “We just decided we needed to start with prayer and each parish is working on that.”

Like some other parishioners, Deacon Ron has a daughter in the religious life, giving him a unique view into the discernment process. Along with the school, parishioners support those in religious life with cards throughout the year. Half an hour before the weekend Masses at St. Michael, the Rosary is offered for the intention of increasing vocations, and special



*The Adam Miller family prays with the traveling Vocations Crucifix (St. Theresa).*

meditations are read. In addition, adoration is held from 8:30 a.m. on Wednesdays until 4:45 p.m. Thursday, concluding with daily Mass at 5 p.m.

Julie Landgren from St. Theresa joined the Vocations Committee simply because priests are so vital to the Church and our faith communities. She recognizes that each vocation starts in a family.

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Welcome

## 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?

"I go to our parish," is the usual response, and rightly so, because 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*

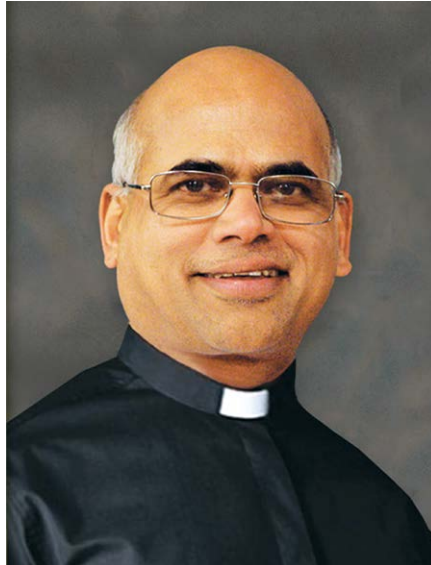
# HONORING OUR LADY IN MAY

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

**M**ay is Mary's month. For centuries, Catholics throughout the world have included special devotions to the Blessed Mother in their activities during May. Best known, I'm sure, is the widespread and ever-popular practice of crowning an image of Our Lady with flowers during the month.

May is a beautiful month, full of renewal and hope. The March winds and the April showers have done their work, and the spring flowers are in bloom. Even though the earliest signs of spring have passed, May doesn't quite have the look or feel of summer. It is spring at its finest! And it's not only the flowers or trees that show new life in May. For many students, May is the month to prepare for graduations, and these students will soon move on to new phases in their lives.

And of course, May is a month of joy for all of us who claim the Church as our spiritual home. We spend the whole month this year in the Easter season, which closes with Pentecost on May 28. The joy of the Resurrection, the glory of the



Ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit are the themes that fill our Christian calendar.

But as we rejoice with Mary at her Son's triumph over sin, Satan, and death, we remember her faithfulness to God's will throughout her life. Indeed, she can be viewed as the model Christian steward. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops pointed to her in its pastoral letter on stewardship: "After Jesus, it is the Blessed Virgin Mary who by her example most perfectly teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship in

their fullest sense" (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 41).

Let us follow her example of total dedication to God as we rejoice in the blessings He gives us this month!

Sincerely yours in Christ and His Mother,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Antony Thelheker". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Fr. Antony  
Pastor

"After Jesus, it is the Blessed Virgin Mary who by her example most perfectly teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship in their fullest sense"

(*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 41).



# EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

## *Faithfully Serving the Homebound*



*Bill Spelic distributes the Eucharist.*



There are many ways to get involved in the Catholic Mass, from singing in the choir to serving as a lector. As the saying goes, “many hands make light work.” We need every parishioner to make our Masses what they are. One ministry requires faithful stewards to care for their work — the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the Homebound. The most important part of the Catholic Mass is when our faith community receives Jesus’ precious Body and Blood. However, not everyone can attend Mass — by bringing the Eucharist to those who cannot worship with us, we extend Mass past the walls of our parishes.

Sacred Heart parishioner Annette Ackman has been involved with this ministry for about 20 years, bringing the Eucharist to the assisted living facility in Greeley. Because there are so many dedicated ministry members, she delivers about once every two months.

“If I couldn’t go to Mass, it would mean a lot to me to have someone bring the Eucharist,” Annette says. “That’s one reason I do this.”

Annette also feels so blessed by the gratitude of those who receive the Eucharist.

“The thankfulness in their eyes as we say, ‘This is the Body of Christ,’ makes up for taking the time in our busy schedules to go to the assisted living or a private home,” she says. “It enriches our lives in a way nothing else can.”

On Wednesdays, there is Mass at the assisted living facility. If Fr. Antony is unable to celebrate Mass, volunteers lead a Communion Service for the residents. On Sunday mornings at 10 a.m., those receiving the Eucharist gather in the dining area. Volunteers distribute the Eucharist to people in their homes, as well.

“It’s really special to me to bring the Eucharist to people,” Annette says. “It’s an honor.”

Annette previously served as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at Mass. She also felt honored to serve the parish in that ministry. Bringing the Eucharist outside the church means so much to her.

“Do this in remembrance of me’ — we are all

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## OF HOLY COMMUNION TO THE HOMEBOUND *the Precious Body and Blood of Our Lord*

humbled and in awe when we hear the priest say these words at Mass,” she says. “We all want to be servants of Jesus. How better to serve than to take Jesus to those who are unable to come to Mass?”

Sacred Heart parishioner and parish nurse Jeanette Walsh also serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. She got involved about three years ago, shortly after moving to Greeley. When churches were closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, it made her realize the importance of the Eucharist.

“The people at the assisted living facility just want someone to talk to,” Jeanette says. “I enjoy bringing them that human touch and bringing them Jesus.”

Annette and Jeanette would encourage others to get involved, whether by bringing the Eucharist to the homebound or in other ways. Annette, for example, has loved the opportunities she’s had with the Catholic Daughters and teaching CCD.

“My faith is important to me,” Annette says. “It’s good for your faith to find ways to give back.”

*To get involved as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to the Homebound, please contact Annette Ackman (Sacred Heart) 308-428-5205, Peg Zwiener (St. Michael’s) 402-608-0043, Paul Nordhues (St. Theresa’s) 308-750-0628 or call the parish office 308-497-2662.*

## VOCATIONS MINISTRY *continued from front cover*

“Our parish is the place where families are nurtured and vocations are born,” Julie says. “I think at our local parishes, it’s our responsibility to create an environment to help young people hear and answer God’s call.”

St. Theresa has a Communion service at 9 a.m. on Thursday mornings followed by adoration and a Rosary for vocations. On the last Sunday of the month, there is another Holy Hour at 10 a.m. Sacred Heart devotes its first hour of Adoration to Vocations every First Tuesday of the month.

Each parish has a traveling Vocations Crucifix that was made by Fr. Jim Murphy out of old oak church pews. These crucifixes, along with literature to help families pray for priests and vocations, are passed each week to a new

family. Patty Harris, a parishioner at Sacred Heart and member of the Vocations Committee, is impressed by how devoted parishioners are to this practice. Over 80 families at Sacred Heart are signed up to take the crucifix home for a week, display it, and pray with it. At Sacred Heart parish, whoever is taking the crucifix home that week has the option of processing out of Mass with it along with the priest.

“It’s beautiful, especially seeing families do it,” she says.

While working together, each parish has adopted ways of praying that work best for them and support, encourage, and nurture families.

“I just think it’s very important to plant the seeds and let the Holy Spirit do the rest,” Julie says.

*To join the prayers for vocations, check the bulletin for details or call the parish office at 308-497-2662.*



# WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO AT MASS

## *A Look at the Postures and Gestures During the Central Act of Catholic Worship*

The Catholic liturgy includes many different gestures, postures, and symbols. As a Catholic, you are likely familiar with these practices, which include sitting, standing, and kneeling during Mass. But these gestures all have specific meanings and are designed to help us pray with all of our being: not only mind and soul, but body as well. To better understand the meaning behind these physical movements, we need to keep in mind two important aspects of the Catholic Mass — that the priest acts in the person of Christ, and that Jesus is present in the Eucharist.

Standing and speaking in the place of Jesus, the celebrating priest leads us with the gestures,

traditions, and rituals that are part of the Order of the Mass, and we respond to these with our own actions and words. In this way, the Mass is much like a conversation and shared meal with Christ Himself.

Secondly, Jesus is fully present in the consecrated Eucharist, in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. This is the Catholic doctrine of *transubstantiation*, which states that the bread and wine literally become Jesus during the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass.

So, why do we assume each specific posture and make different gestures during the Mass, and what do they signify?

### **Why We Sit During the Mass**

After the Introductory Rite at each Mass, we sit for the Liturgy of the Word. As we listen to the readings from the lectionary, sitting indicates our willingness to be students at the feet of Jesus. We also sit down for the Homily, as we pay close attention and take in what is being preached. We are seated again while the Eucharistic elements are being prepared: a gesture of anticipation, as we prepare ourselves for and eagerly await the climax of the Mass in the Eucharistic Prayer.

### **Why We Stand During the Mass**

At the very beginning of the Mass, we stand for the Introductory Rite, which includes the Penitential Act. Here we acclaim the *Kyrie Eleison*, meaning “Lord, have mercy” in Greek. The *Kyrie* is an ancient Christian prayer in which we confess our sins to both our Almighty Father and our fellow Christians. Standing during the Penitential Act shows that we are owning up to our sinfulness and openly asking for the Lord’s mercy.

Standing is also a simple but

profound way of honoring and respecting Jesus during the Mass, both in the person of the priest and in the scriptures, especially the Gospel. While we sit for the first and second readings, we stand for the Gospel reading. The Gospel is the pinnacle of the Word of God and to hear it proclaimed aloud is a great honor, which is why we rise from our seats and proclaim “Alleluia” as it is opened. Just before the reading of the Gospel, we make a small sign of the cross with our thumb over our foreheads, lips, and hearts. This simple act is a symbolic request for God to impress His Word upon our minds, lips, and hearts. When the priest or deacon has finished reading the Gospel, he shows respect to the Word of God by kissing the Gospel. After the homily, we stand back up to pray the Nicene Creed as a Profession of Faith, once again standing firm in our ownership of our faith.

### **Why We Kneel During the Mass**

Kneeling is the most humble posture of worship during the Mass. When we kneel, we completely surrender ourselves

to our Heavenly Father. We kneel during several parts of the Mass. After the *Holy, Holy, Holy*, we spend almost the rest of the Mass on our knees — an incredible act of faith and devotion by which we acknowledge that Jesus is personally present among us.

As we kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest’s many gestures are also precise and meaningful. He makes the Sign of the Cross over the bread and wine and proclaims Christ’s own words: “This is my Body,” and “This is my Blood”. As the bread and wine are consecrated, the priest kneels several times in front of the Blessed Sacrament to express reverence. Before or while receiving the Eucharist, it is traditional to kneel, bow, or genuflect to express your humility before God.

The Mass is rich with meaning — every element and gesture represents something profound and beautiful. When we understand them and take them to heart, each moment we spend at Mass will become more transformative and nourishing to our souls.

# WELCOME MINISTRY

*A Way to Evangelize and Serve Others in Hospitality*

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*“If people feel welcome, they want to belong. It is spreading the Word of God and bringing people into our faith. We invite them into faith, friendship and ministry which is vital to our parish community.” — SANDY MILLER*

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St. Paul said in his letter to the Hebrews, “Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels” (Hebrews 13:2). For the Welcome Ministry, this perspective is an important one. When we are welcoming to those in the parish and the community beyond our church, we are given the opportunity to love and serve others in a very tangible way.

At Sacred Heart, the Welcome Ministry reaches out to newcomers in the community to deliver them a welcome packet to their house, as well as meet them and welcome them to the community. This packet includes a parish registration and information about the parish. This ministry relies heavily on parishioners helping them to know when new people move into the community.

Jackie and Tom Nekoliczak have been a part of this ministry for several years.

“This ministry is so important because it gives people that are new to the area a sense of community,” Tom says. “We are able to share our faith with new members of the community. Without new members, our parish will slowly fade.”

“If people don’t feel like they are welcome, it is easier to not be involved or come back,” Jackie says. “Everyone wants to feel included and if we don’t step up and be that welcoming person, who will?”

Sandy Miller is the head of the Welcome Ministry at St. Theresa’s.

“What it really comes down to at St. Theresa’s is that *everyone* is a part of the Welcome Ministry,” Sandy says. “We invite people in and



*The Welcoming Committee at Sacred Heart — (from left) Tom Nekoliczak, Jeanette Walsh, Jackie Nekoliczak, Kelli Wood and Jason McIntyre (not pictured, Paige Wood)*

get to know them. We have such a family atmosphere here that it just makes people feel like a part of the parish. I just make sure that new parishioners fill out their registration and get a stewardship booklet.”

The first step of hospitality in our churches

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## WELCOME MINISTRY *continued from page 7*

is the invitation. The Welcome Ministry is there to fill the role in that first step. After that, it is the people within our parish community who truly make people feel welcome and wanted.

“If people feel welcome, they want to belong,” Sandy says. “It is spreading the Word of God and bringing people into our faith. We invite them into faith, friendship and ministry which is vital to our parish community. We know the struggles of the diocese so to keep the parish strong, we have to keep people here. When you feel like you are welcome and wanted, then you are excited to be here and you are more involved. This act of hospitality is so important to our faith community.”



*Visiting in the church entrance,  
welcoming one another to parish*

*To inform the Welcome Ministry about new members of the community,  
or to become a part of the ministry, contact the parish office at 308-497-2662.*

## 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