

VISITATION SUPPER MINISTRY OFFERS HOSPITALITY AND SUPPORT TO THOSE IN MOURNING

“We All Enjoy Doing This for Families”

Our Families in Faith parishes are close-knit. So, when a member passes away, we all feel the loss. Anyone who has lost a family member knows it can be a difficult time, with so many details that require attention. But a dedicated group at Sacred Heart and St. Michael’s is there to make sure that the family doesn’t feel this loss alone. Members of the Visitation Supper Ministry step in with food for the family between the viewing of the body and the wake. It’s just one less detail the family has to worry about. The ministry typically serves anywhere from 5 to 75 people.

Jean Herrera helped start — and continues to lead — the Visitation Supper Ministry at St. Michael’s.

“I like to think it’s a way to show small-town hospitality and good Christian kindness. No one leaves hungry, that’s for sure.” — Jean Herrera



“All of us on the volunteer list have had a family member pass away,” Jean says. “We know how hard it can be.”

A main course, salads, and dessert are all ready to go, so the family can eat before the wake. Sometimes, family members will come and eat during the wake. Children can color or run around a bit. It gives everyone a short reprieve from the stress.

“It’s beautiful to be able to serve someone’s family after they are gone,” Jean says. “It’s humbling.”

One woman served by this ministry at

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THE TRAITS OF THE CHRISTIAN STEWARD

Each day, we strive to live stewardship in our lives, recognizing our roles as “God’s co-workers” in His creative, redemptive, and sanctifying work. But in our quest to live as disciples of Christ, many obstacles often arise.

One of the most prevalent roadblocks in living stewardship is understanding the traits that make up a good Christian steward.

Surely, it would be much more convenient if we had some sort of “stewardship list” that could outline the necessary steps to becoming a good steward. Unfortunately, it more often feels like living stewardship is a lifelong journey that we will never fully comprehend.

Fortunately, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, gives some insight into the characteristics that make up a good Christian steward.

The Christian steward should display some of the following traits:

Insight — Before the disciples could live what we know as the stewardship way of life, they needed a flash of insight or a certain way of viewing the world and their relationship to it in a fresh light. This “divine grandeur,” more than anything else, is often what sets people on the path to Christian stewardship (*Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, 39).

Conscientiousness — Stewards are fully conscious of their accountability in sharing of their time, talent, and treasure. As caretakers of the gifts that God has given them, they have the opportunity and responsibility to use them to their fullest potential to spread God’s Kingdom on Earth (40).

Generosity — Christian stewards are generous out of love as well as duty. They should display a desire to share with and care for others based on the sacramental graces they have received. And they are also cognizant of

the many warnings that the New Testament presents to those who fail in charity and authentic love (40).

Joy — Christian stewards are often presented with difficult obstacles, but they should remain joyful in the face of challenges to their lives of stewardship. Like Paul, the good steward is able to say, “I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy all the more because of all our affliction” (2 Cor. 7:4). Only by serving with a joyful spirit will stewards fully reap the rewards of their service, both in this life and the next.

Indeed, living as a Christian steward is a lifelong journey with many ups and downs along the way. But if we strive to consciously incorporate each of these characteristics into our giving of time, talent, and treasure, we will find that the responsibilities of a good Christian steward will become much clearer with each experience of service.

A Letter From Our Pastor

USING OUR TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE FOR THE GOOD OF OUR NATION

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we celebrate our nation with the Fourth of July holiday to start the month, it is important for us to reflect on the connections between Catholic stewardship, discipleship, and American patriotism.

As Catholics, we are called to be good stewards of the gifts that God has given us, including our time, our talent, and our material resources. This means using these gifts in ways that honor God, build up our communities, and serve our fellow human beings. In doing so, we are living out our calling as disciples of Christ.

American patriotism, in its best form, is a natural outgrowth of Catholic stewardship and discipleship. It is a recognition that we have been blessed with a great country, with a rich history and diverse culture, and with opportunities to live out our faith in the public sphere. It is a call to use our gifts and our resources to make our country a better place, to serve our fellow citizens, and to uphold the values that make our nation great.

At the same time, it is important to remember that American patriotism is not the same as blind nationalism or jingoism. We are called to love our country, but not at the expense of our faith or our commitment to justice and the common good. We must always be willing to critique

our country when it falls short of its ideals and to work for change when necessary.

As we celebrate the Fourth of July holiday, let us remember that our Catholic faith calls us to be good stewards, faithful disciples, and patriotic Americans. Let us pray for our country, for our leaders, and for all those who strive to make it a better place. And let us commit ourselves anew to using our gifts and our resources to serve others, to work for justice, and to build up the common good.

Can you imagine it's eight years since I came to Families in Faith? It's time to move on! I tried to give my best shot at being helpful to the families entrusted to my care. For all that had been, thank you! Thanks to everyone who helped me to make my life holy, joyful, and hopeful. In fact, that's what I tried to do for you

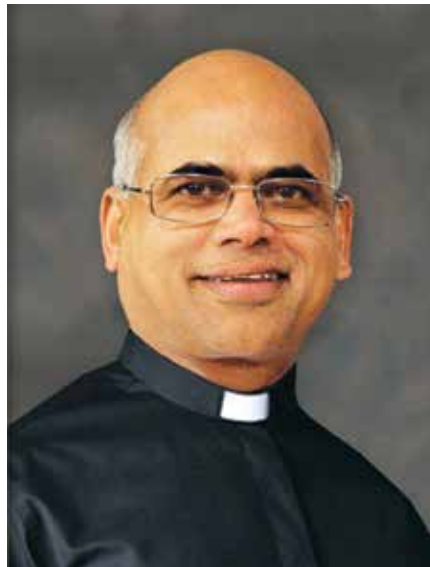
during the past eight years.

May God bless you and your families, and may God bless the United States of America.

Sincerely yours in Christ and His Mother,



Fr. Anthony
Pastor



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STRONG FAITH FOUNDATION



Forming children in the faith is important in their upbringing and in building our society. While parents are the primary educators of their children, parish programs also assist children to learn about the faith and teachings of Christ. In our three parishes, St. Michael, Sacred Heart, and St. Theresa, children have the opportunity to learn more about the faith in the respective Religious Education programs. All three of the programs will start a new year coinciding with the beginning of the school year.

At St. Michael, the first through sixth-grade students meet from 4 to 5 p.m. and the seventh to 12th-grade students meet from 7 to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays. Throughout the year, there are various activities including a school year opening Mass, glow-in-the-dark Rosary, a Nativity program, and the First Communion and Confirmation retreats for the students receiving their sacraments. Most activities wrap up by the end of April, to leave room for graduation and other events in May and June.

“Throughout the year on the third weekend of every month, we do a youth Mass where they do the ministries,” says Holly Carraher, who leads the Religious Education program at St. Michael. “We continue that through the summer.”

The students take on the readings, altar serving, music ministry, greeting, and taking up collection baskets.

Holly says that while discussions about faith should begin in the home, they can continue in the Religious Education program.

“It’s a great place for their children to learn more about their faith,” she says. “The thing is, faith should start at home, that’s where they need to learn it. But this is another place they can join and learn more with discussion and their peers about faith.”

Mary Wood is new to leading the Religious

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PROGRAMS BUILDING FAITH FOR OUR CHILDREN

Education program at Sacred Heart, having joined last year. For her, Religious Education is about instilling from a young age the importance of faith in our daily lives, and not waiting for adversity to turn to God later on in life.

“I believe we need God in our life and if kids can develop that early on, it’ll benefit them forever,” Mary says.

The children in first through sixth grade meet from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. and the seventh to 12th-grade students meet from 7 to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays.

During Lent and Advent, the students in the Religious Education program at Sacred Heart have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, preparing them for two important seasons in the liturgical calendar. They have a Mass on the first Sunday of each month, wherein the children are in charge of the various services including music and serving. They also participate in Totus Tuus and Vacation Bible School in the summer months.

Sharon Swett is also new to leading the Religious Education program at St. Theresa, having also joined last year. In the past, classes at St. Theresa took place weekly on Sundays at the church before Mass. This past year, however, they have had class on Sunday at 9:45 a.m. on the first Sunday of the month.

“The teachers and parents are given a schedule of classes in September,” Sharon says. “The other weeks, the parents teach their children at home either on Sunday or whenever it works in their schedule. Some have found reading a little each night works well.”

“It’s a great place for their children to learn more about their faith. The thing is, faith should start at home, that’s where they need to learn it. But this is another place they can join and learn more with discussion and their peers about faith.” — Holly Carraher

When they meet, the teachers do a quick review of the previous month’s lessons and the students’ workbooks, then teach a new lesson.

“This type of program encourages parents to be involved with their children’s faith education while still allowing the children to be connected to their church family,” Sharon says.

Throughout the month, there are also other activities for the children and their families. The second Sunday of the month is Children’s Mass, at which the students participate as greeters, altar servers, offertory collectors, readers, and singers. The third Sunday of the month is Family Rosary before Mass at 10:30 a.m. The fourth Sunday of the month is adoration.

“Religious Ed is very important,” Sharon says. “Children need to be taught about Jesus and the Catholic faith at their age level of learning — attending Mass is not enough.”

To learn more about our Faith Formation programs, please visit families-infaith.com.

SACRISTANS

The Simple, Yet Essential Role of P

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist is the “source and summit” of our Catholic faith (1324). Many of us come to Mass each Sunday, sit in our pew and partake in this beautiful liturgy. But for things to run smoothly, a little preparation is required. That is where the sacristan ministry comes in.

The role of a sacristan could be compared to readying your home for dinner guests. You set the table and prepare the food so that everyone has everything that they need to simply come in and enjoy themselves. Similarly, the sacristan prepares everything so the priest can walk in and celebrate Mass, and the parishioners can come to celebrate the Liturgy.

While the specific duties of a sacristan can vary based on what is needed for each liturgy and the preferences of each priest, a sacristan’s basic job is to prepare the items needed for that Mass. This typically would include filling the ciborium with the unconsecrated hosts and placing them at the back of the church to be brought forward at the presentation of the gifts,

filling the cruets and pitcher with the lavabo, and seeing that the purificator, corporal, and lavabo towels are all ready to be used during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Finally, they assist with the cleanup after Mass.

In Pope Paul VI’s document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, it is stated: “In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit” (14). Keeping this in mind, one way that we foster “full and active participation” is by being involved in the liturgy itself. And when we step up and take responsibility for the different roles to be filled in the liturgy, we foster this full and active participation in the Mass. We also learn more about the liturgy itself and our understanding and appreciation for the Mass grows. For a sacristan, the full participation in the liturgy is extended as one learns about the physical elements incorporated in the celebration of the Mass.

“Many people don’t know that we even do this work, but it takes all of us filling this role to get the work done — otherwise it doesn’t happen, then the priest or the deacons have to do the work instead. It doesn’t take much time and it is something that we can do to serve our parish.” — Jeanette Walsh



SACRISTAN MINISTRY:

Preparing Our Children for the Mass

For the sacristans of our three parishes, this essential, behind-the-scenes ministry is a special role that they feel privileged to fill.

“Being a sacristan has really deepened my faith in different ways,” says Claire Kaiser, who has been a sacristan at St. Michael’s for over 15 years. “When you are responsible for the preparation, you get something more out of the Mass. It has given me a deeper understanding and appreciation for the different parts of the Mass. It has strengthened my faith and I feel proud going to church.”

This simple but impactful work within the church is a big help to our busy priests and deacons.

“I have been a sacristan at St. Theresa’s for about two years,” says Helen Plugge. “I like being able to do this work that is behind the scenes. Fr. Antony is so busy with his work in the three parishes that this is one way that we can help him.”

As Claire notes, this is not a time-consuming ministry.

“We arrive about fifteen minutes early for Mass,” she says. “We fill the hosts and put the water and wine in the cruets. We have two trays that we set up, one for the altar servers to set on the side table and one on the table at the back for the offertory. After Mass, we make sure that things are cleaned up properly.”

“This ministry is something that I found I could do,” says Jeanette Walsh, who has been a sacristan at Sacred Heart for several years. “I am not very good at being still — I am the kind of person who likes to be doing things. Many people don’t know that we even do this work, but it takes all of us filling this role to get the



work done — otherwise, it doesn’t happen, then the priest or the deacons have to do the work instead. It doesn’t take much time and it is something that we can do to serve our parish.”

Each of the parishes has its own rotations and schedules for the Sacristan Ministry. They work together to make sure that all weekend Masses, daily Masses, Holy Days of Obligation, and funerals are covered within the parish. Each parish would welcome more sacristans to be a part of this important work. Those starting this ministry receive hands-on training from another sacristan to learn the different tasks for the job. All are welcome to join this important ministry.

To become a sacristan, please contact the following at your parish:

St. Michael — Claire Kaiser, 308-497-2397

Sacred Heart — Jeanette Walsh, 402-499-7104

St. Theresa — Helen Plugge, 308-750-3070

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VISITATION SUPPER MINISTRY *continued from front cover*

St. Michael's was so touched that she signed up as a volunteer. Jean notes that the ministry had family come from out of town for the wake, and they are incredibly appreciative.

"People are often overwhelmed by the food," Jean says. "We know it makes a big difference, and we all love doing this."

Sacred Heart's ministry is led by Mickey Smyth — Midge Johnson, who has passed away, helped get this started.

"This leaves one less thing for the family to worry about during the wake," Mickey says. "We all enjoy doing this for families."

This ministry gives volunteers a chance to visit with people in town for the services whom they maybe haven't seen in years. At most funerals, Jean, Mickey, and the volunteers know the deceased. This ministry is a beautiful way to step in and serve their family.

Mickey and Jean are thankful to the committed stewards who make this ministry happen. They are always willing to step up to be there for families.

"I like to think it's a way to show small-town hospitality and good Christian kindness," Jean says. "No one leaves hungry, that's for sure."

To get involved in the Visitation Suppers Ministry at Sacred Heart, contact Mickey Smyth at 308-223-0084; at St. Michael's, contact Jean Herrera at 308-550-1296.

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