



CHILDREN OF CHRIST EARLY LEARNING CENTER BRINGS HANDS-ON LEARNING TO SPALDING

Children hold a special place in Jesus' kingdom, as we learn in the Gospel of Matthew — "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). The children of our parish and community are special in God's eyes, just as they are special to us. This is why we are expanding opportunities for childcare in Spalding.

The current Children of Christ in-home daycare program offers opportunities for children of our parish and the Spalding community to attend a Christ-centered daycare. Soon, that opportunity will be available to even more children when the Children of Christ Early Learning Center opens in 2022. The project is currently in the design phases, and the finished center will likely accommodate 30 children upon opening. Plans are underway for an accredited preschool, as



Kara Schindler serves as preschool teacher and administrator.

well as childcare for infants to pre-school age.

Bringing more of a faith-based approach to the center is in the works, as well. The current program is a hands-on approach to learning. The staff works to develop each child's sense of self-worth and autonomy in a nurturing environment.

"Our goal is to meet the childcare needs of the community of Spalding," says Kara Schindler, preschool teacher and administrator for the Children of Christ Early Learning Center. "When the center opens, we want to work on the whole child with hands-on learning, not just have them learn in seats all day."

The official vision is to "Create and maintain a safe, supportive and nurturing learning environment for all children, families, and staff which promotes social/emotional competence as a foundation

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Meet The Fosters:

LIVING OUT STEWARDSHIP AS A FAMILY

Even amid the hustle and bustle of young family life, Tom Foster makes time for what is most essential.

“Fr. Antony has done a great job preaching about how important it is to spend time with God every day, and I try to teach this to my children, as well,” he says. “This is a big priority for me. I make sure to teach my kids how to pray Grace before meals and other prayers. I am also a firm believer in treating others as you want to be treated, so I try to impart this practice to my children, as well.”

Day by day, Tom and his wife, Lacey, work hard to bring Christ’s love and truth to the hearts of their four young children — Brinley, John, Madison, and the baby on the way. This summer, they brought Brinley (now in kindergarten) to Vacation Bible School (VBS). It made such a profound impression on her that she will probably never forget it.

“Brinley really enjoyed VBS,” Tom says. “Even though it was weeks ago, she still talks about it a lot!”

For the past 10 years, Tom and Lacey have been an integral part of our parish family in many ways. Not only have they brought us the joyful presence of their children, but they have also contributed to



Tom and Lacey are grateful that God led them to belong to our parish family.

the life of our parish in numerous ways. For four years, Tom had the opportunity to serve on the Parish Council.

“I really liked being on the Parish Council, and I believe it was time well spent,” Tom says. “If I was asked to do it again, I would!”

Tom has also enjoyed being part of the Environmental and Landscape Committee, and helping with the renovation of our parish and school. He now serves as head of the committee.

“We painted the interior of the church, laid exterior concrete at the front of the church, and put new windows

and air conditioning in the school,” he says. “Now that the renovations are finished, we are looking at doing various landscaping projects and planting new trees. I help do a lot of the projects, which is a good way for me to live out my stewardship commitment. However, we are limited on resources, so we are always looking for more hands.”

Overall, Tom and Lacey are grateful that God led them to belong to our parish family.

“We appreciate that it is a small, close-knit church community where everyone knows each other and cares about one another,” Tom says.

A Letter From Our Pastor

THE DAYS MAY BE LONG, BUT THE YEARS ARE SHORT

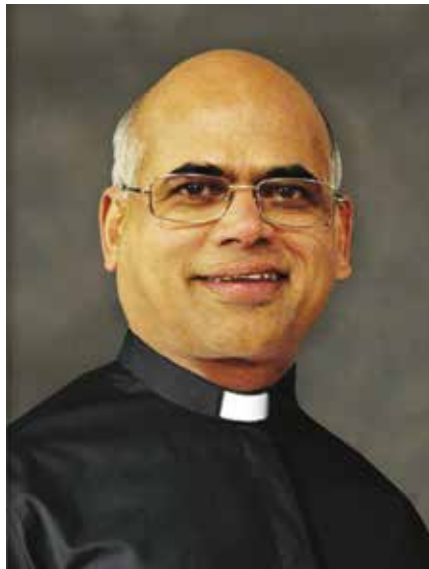
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It is hard to believe September is upon us. I have always heard that time seems to go faster when you get older, but I also feel that sometimes the days are long, but the years are short. Didn't summer just begin? Now we are looking at fall and, before we know it, Thanksgiving and Christmas will be here.

There is a common theory that time speeds up as you get older. But what about the children who are heading back to school? I'll bet most of them think the summer was way too short and flew by in a nanosecond. Perhaps time goes fast for all of us, regardless of our age, especially when we are enjoying ourselves. It fits with the adage, "Time flies when you're having fun."

Fun was part of my childhood. It does not always seem to be part of my adult life. However, if I look at life from a stewardship perspective, "fun" does not seem to be out of reach. Stewardship is a very positive way of living because it focuses on gifts and thanksgiving. Stewardship asks us to look at life from what we have, not from what we do not have. Some of the happiest people I know are those who practice stewardship and live it out in their daily lives. Yes, they bear crosses, and yes, their lives are not perfect, nor are they perfect people. Nevertheless, they say "thank you" often, and they say it, especially to God.

We all recognize that January is when our new year starts because we get a new calendar. Nevertheless, September seems like the beginning of a new year in many ways. Schools have restarted, vacations are over, and even our ministries seem to pick up and become more



active. Perhaps now is the time we should really make those resolutions.

I would ask you to think in terms of stewardship resolutions. Many of you are already very involved in parish life. I would invite you to resolve to find the time to pray, or perhaps to just listen. God does talk to us, but often we simply do not listen. If you already do set time aside for individual prayer, decide to also take part in some of our community prayer opportunities. If you are someone who does not attend Mass regularly, make your mind

up to come to Mass more frequently. If you are someone who usually attends Mass, but you are not involved in one of our many parish ministries, give of yourself in that way. I am not talking about a total change of life, but I am talking about dedicating yourself further to something that concerns your faith.

Throughout the Bible, people encounter Jesus and walk away completely changed individuals. That is what my challenge to you is. Meet the Lord halfway; give Him a chance to lead and guide you; try to take another step in your faith and stewardship journey. You, too, can have the happiness of the good and just steward. Now that could be fun. St. Pope John Paul II said it very well: "The future starts today, not tomorrow."

Sincerely yours in Christ and His Mother,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Antony Stehlik".

Fr. Antony
Pastor



OUR ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP

Thanking God

You have to take care of yourself before you can take care of those you love. This rationale is difficult for many of us to accept. Mothers and fathers routinely place the needs of their children before their own; soldiers at war often throw their own safety to the wind in the interest of protecting their fellow soldiers. The story of Jesus also focuses on giving to others. If Christ calls us to imitate Him – to become completely selfless – then it would seem that focusing on ourselves might counteract our efforts as Christians.

Nevertheless, as we enter into our annual Stewardship Renewal, Fr. Antony Thekkekara is asking us all to focus a bit more on ourselves. No, he's not encouraging self-centeredness; he's asking us to examine our own lives and determine the areas that are in need of growth. Before the stewardship way of life can totally transform our parish, it must begin in each of our hearts. As each individual's spiritual life blossoms and grows, so will our parish as a whole. Will you plant the seed of stewardship in your own heart?

*Commitment Weekend is
September 11-12.
Don't forget to bring your
Commitment Card to Mass!*

How do I use my Commitment Card?

Your commitment card allows you to make commitments to prayer, parish ministries, and offertory giving. It is designed to be used by the whole family.

Time Section: Except for the ill and home-bound, everyone should be able to check "Come to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days." Try to check at least a few other items. Daily

prayer should be a priority for every person trying to grow closer to God.

Talent Section: You can either sign up for new ministries or re-commit to your current ministries. Be sure to write your first name next to the ministry! This is especially important if the card is being used by more than one person.

Treasure Section: Clearly print how much money you plan to give each week or month to our parish. Try to take a step toward giving five percent of your income to Families in Faith.

Is your prayer life in need of a tune-up?

Honestly ask yourself, "How much time do I spend in prayer each week?" The answer is probably a bit embarrassing. Everyone wants to spend more time in prayer, but there's just never enough time to do everything we want to do. Good intentions are just that: intentions. This year, as you're discerning how you will offer your time to God, resolve to follow through with your commitments. Consider each moment you spend in prayer as nourishment for your soul. The spiritual health of our parish is only as strong as the sum of its parts (individual parishioners).

Is your level of parish involvement in need of a boost?

We give our talents back to God when we get involved in ministries at Families in Faith. And, with a host of ministries to choose from, there's something for everyone. Sure, ministries give parishioners opportunities to serve others in the community, but they also benefit those in the ministry itself. Ask anyone who actively participates in a ministry at Families in Faith, "Why do you enjoy serving in this way?" They'll probably say, "I get more out of the ministry than the people I serve." This year, as you're discerning how you will offer your talents to

RENEWAL

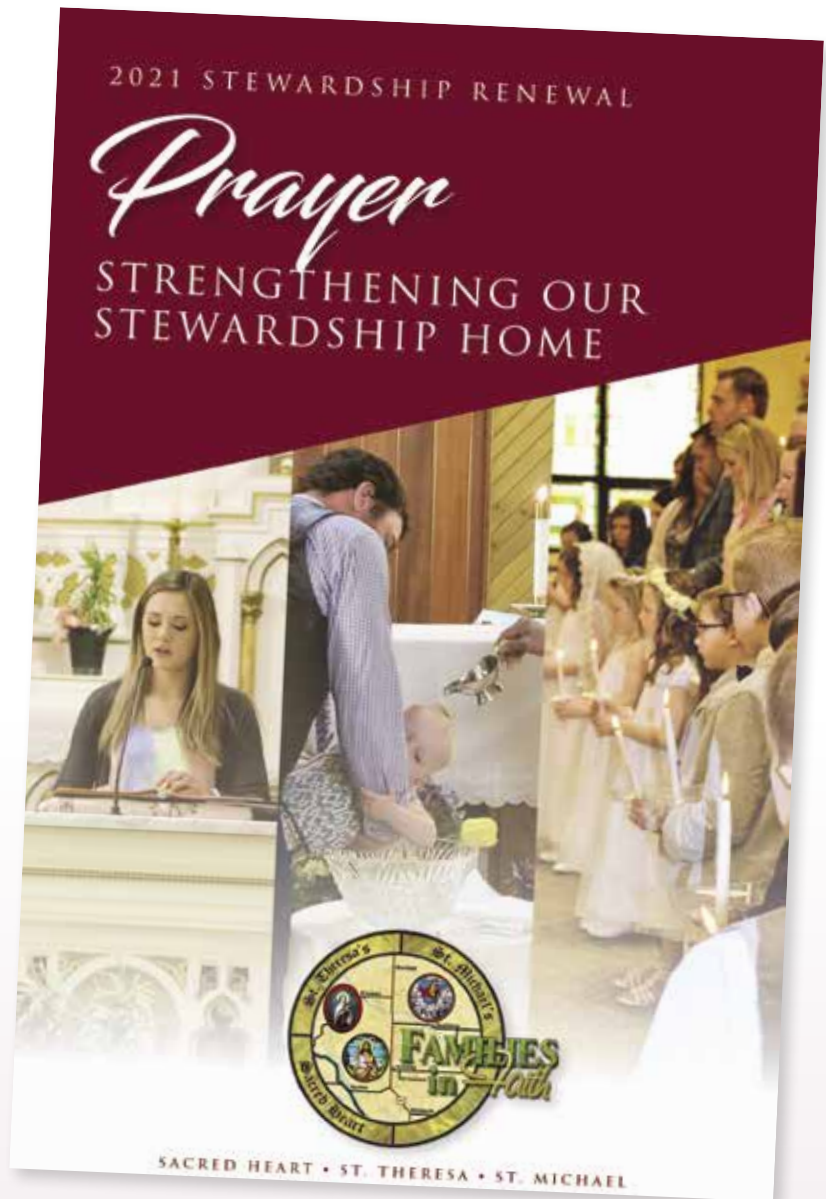
for the Blessings He has Bestowed on Us

God, consider signing up for a ministry that may benefit you, like a Bible study, prayer group, or retreat. Or, contribute to an outreach ministry where your good deeds not only help others in the community, but also give you feelings of satisfaction and thankfulness.

Do you give a percentage of your income to the offertory?

It may be hard to see offertory giving as a way to “help yourself,” but when we approach the subject from a spiritual viewpoint, it can lead to individual spiritual growth and an increase in faith. Even the savviest businessperson worries about his or her personal finances from time to time. Adding a weekly offertory check to the list of monthly bills may seem crazy but, ultimately, sacrificial giving forces us to cut unnecessary spending, create a budget and have faith that God will help us make it through the month. All of these are good things for each of us, individually. After faithfully giving to the offertory for a few months, many Catholics find that it’s not only possible to give a weekly offering, but that the fruits of their gift far outweigh the expense.

At Families in Faith, we ask that you give five percent to our parish, one percent to the diocese, and four percent to other charities. Why a percentage of income? First, because the tithe (10 percent) is a scriptural benchmark that the Church has honored for centuries (see Malachi 3:10). Secondly, we give a percentage of income because it is a common-sense standard by which everyone can equitably support the parish. Most of all, we give because we believe God comes first in everything, even finances.



Every parish family receives a special “Stewardship Package” in the mail that further explains our parish’s vision of stewardship. It includes a booklet that describes every ministry in the parish, as well as your commitment card.



ST. RAPHAEL



ST. MICHAEL



ST. GABRIEL

Celebrating the Feast of the *Archangels*

Every Sept. 29, the Church celebrates the feast day of the Archangels — St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael. We are blessed to be inspired by these “servants and messengers of God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 329).

The term “archangels” has its Scriptural basis in the New Testament (1 Thes 4:16, Jude 1:9), indicating a chief or leading angel. “Archangel” generally refers to St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael, as they are the three angels most frequently mentioned throughout Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The fact that these three angels are mentioned by name on multiple occasions indicates the significance of their roles in the history of salvation. It is because of these important roles that we take pause to celebrate on Sept. 29.

St. Michael is mentioned by name on several occasions in Sacred Scripture (Dn 10:13, Rev 12:7), and his role in the Tradition of the Church has been extensively documented. He has been widely referred to as the “great prince,” and is most often associated with the apocalypse — the final battle against Satan. Christian Tradition gives St. Michael four different roles, but he has primarily been regarded as the patron and protector of the Church.

St. Gabriel is mentioned by name in Scripture (Lk 1:19), and Tradition has also assigned him implicit roles within Scripture where he is not specifically mentioned. Most important, however, is St. Gabriel’s role as the messenger of God, delivering to Mary the announcement of the birth of Our Savior (Lk 1:26).

St. Raphael is mentioned by name only in the Book of Tobit, where he is responsible for healing Tobias. Raphael means “God has healed” and thus, he has also often been associated with the “angel of the Lord” (Jn 5:4).

The feast day on Sept. 29 gives each of us the opportunity to consider our own role in the Church, as we gratefully commemorate the Archangels responsible for carrying out their roles of defender, messenger, and healer.

SPALDING ACADEMY

READY FOR A NEW YEAR OF EDUCATION AND FORMATION IN THE FAITH

When we think of the year 2020, the word “normal” does not come to mind. The last school year presented some challenges for everyone, but especially students and faculty in schools across the nation. However, Spalding Academy Principal Amy McKay is thankful the school was able to stay open, despite the COVID-19 restrictions. Having made it through this past school year, she’s ready for a new year that, hopefully, looks a bit more normal for the preschool to 12th-grade students.

“Last year, we had to skip community-building opportunities,” Mrs. McKay says. “We really missed those opportunities to get together across grades.”

It was truly a blessing to provide some routine and sense of normalcy for the students during the 2020-2021 school year. Mrs. McKay is thankful that handwashing and sanitizing were enforced at the school, even before the onset of the pandemic.

“We all understood more than ever why handwashing is so important,” Mrs. McKay says. “This past year, everyone took it very seriously.”

Having served as Principal since 2008, Mrs. McKay always enjoys the beginning of a new school year. In particular, she enjoys Catholic Schools Week, which is celebrated in late January. Her favorite activities are those that allow students to mingle across grade levels.

“I love watching a younger student getting paired with a junior or senior for an activity,” she says. “The younger student is usually in awe. The high school student makes a connection and realizes they need to be a good role model.”

Mrs. McKay loves being a part of a school where



the whole child is the focus. No matter the class, the Catholic faith is always incorporated into the curriculum — It’s a large and important ministry.

“We get to talk about vocations to the older students,” she says. “They look at college and also marriage or religious life.

We want to make sure high school prepares them for their whole life.”

This year, there will be a new science curriculum, and the school is welcoming several new teachers. Mr. Sam Polk will teach physical education; Mr. Philip Hanigan will teach math; Mrs. Nicole Ackles will teach English; Ms. Megan Berger will teach in the elementary; Mrs. Kara Schindler will teach preschool and help coordinate the Children of Christ Early Learning Center. In addition, the preschool will expand from one class to two.

As with past years, Mrs. McKay and the teachers want to ensure the high school students are ready for their college and their future careers. They want to continue to ensure all students have access to technology to prepare them for the future. In turn, Mrs. McKay extends her gratitude to parishioners for all of their support.

“We are looking forward to diving into a new school year of educating students in the Catholic faith and focusing on the whole person,” she says.

There are a lot of ways for parishioners to get involved at the school — you can listen to students read, help with math, lead a painting project, or clean, just to name a few.

“You can just send your prayers,” Mrs. McKay says. “Pray for students and their families. Pray we can all continue growth and learning!”

If you would like more information, or if you would like to get involved at the school, please call Spalding Academy at 308-497-2103.

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EARLY LEARNING CENTER *continued from front cover*

for developing the whole child.”

With the need in Spalding for childcare, the Children of Christ Early Learning Center will be a relief and joy for many parents.

“It will be nice to have the whole program under one roof,” Kara says. “This will allow us to better collaborate and work together across age groups.”

Kara’s family previously lived in Missouri and moved to the area this past spring. Working in this position is a great fit for her — she brings to the program an elementary education and special education degree.

“I have always known that teaching would be my career,” she says.

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— KARA SCHINDLER, PRESCHOOL TEACHER
AND ADMINISTRATOR

If you would like more information about the Children of Christ Early Learning Center, please contact Kara Schindler at cofcdaycare@gmail.com.

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