

ST. ISIDORE THE FARMER AREA FAITH COMMUNITY



ST. BRIDGET



SACRED HEART



ST. FRANCIS



ST. MALACHY



VISITATION ORATORY



ST. JOHN

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THE HISPANIC MINISTRY: *A Beautiful Testimony of God's Love*

What started as a simple act of friendship has blossomed into an extraordinary ministry of God's joy, love and peace.

"I had been attending the Spanish Mass each week to support it and make sure things were going smoothly with the altar servers," Stacy Johnson says. "And one of the Hispanic women I was becoming friends with asked if some of the Anglo women from our parish would be interested in meeting with some of the other Hispanic ladies. I said, 'yes!'"

Opening her heart to God's call, Stacy began spearheading the Hispanic Ministry outreach, along with the help of other parishioners. Since August, the group has met regularly on Wednesdays at 1 p.m. at Sacred Heart Parish. Its Hispanic and Anglo members have been truly enjoying one another's companionship and have learned so much from each other. Last fall, the Hispanic members enjoyed helping at our parish fall supper. In November,



This ministry reminds us that all of God's children are welcome to dwell and worship in His house, among His people, as equal brothers and sisters in Christ.

the Anglo members taught the Hispanic members how to make a traditional American Thanksgiving meal. In December, the Hispanic women taught the Anglo women how to make a festive Mexican Christmas dinner. They also prayed a Rosary together, uniting their hearts and souls in preparation for a Mass and *fiesta* in honor of Our Lady of

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The Hispanic Ministry continued from front cover

Guadalupe on Dec. 12.

“We are basically just a bunch of friends gathering together and getting to know each other better,” Brenda Klema says. “It is such a great way to become acquainted with one another. The Hispanic women participate in our Anglo parish events, and we participate in theirs. We support each other and help each other live good lives of faith. When we get together, we talk about our families, and how to be good mothers to our children. We are also helping the Hispanic women get their children integrated into our parish Faith Formation program.”

Ultimately, the ministry bears witness to the beautiful reality that all people, of all ethnic backgrounds and cultural heritages, are children of God.

“Once you get past the fact that we speak different languages, we are all pretty much the same, and we have the same concerns in life,” Brenda says. “Sometimes, the Hispanic women ask about our American customs and culture, and we ask about theirs. They really enjoy practicing their English-speaking skills with us. We laugh a lot together! The ministry really seems to be building a bridge of community that transcends cultural boundaries. It is helping to unify our parish.”

It also reminds us that all of God’s children are welcome to dwell and worship in His house, among His people, as equal brothers and sisters in Christ.

“I have been encouraging the Hispanic women in our group to come to church more often,” Stacy says. “They are very excited to learn the

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English language, and speak it correctly. They want to be part of us! I want to let them know that they are very welcome, and we are very happy to have them at our parish. I hope to help them see what an important job they have to accomplish for Christ in their lives.”

In the future, the ministry hopes to branch out in additional ways, such as by forming a mother’s group.

All are welcome to participate in the various activities of the Hispanic Ministry. All Hispanic visitors are encouraged to register in our parish so they can receive helpful materials and get more involved in the life of our faith community. For more information, please contact Stacy Johnson at 320-264-5785.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

New Year's Resolutions

Dear Parishioners,

As we arrive at the New Year, it is customary that we make resolutions, which hopefully will be carried out during the course of the year. So many times these resolutions pertain to our physical lives — we resolve to exercise more, build a healthier diet, become more organized, etc. These resolutions may also involve the mental aspect of our lives — reading more, attending more cultural events, and so forth.

Too often we forget about the spiritual part of our lives. Our souls need to be tended to, and we need to make sure that we are deepening our relationship with God throughout the entire year.

I would like to give you a list of possible spiritual resolutions. While it might seem difficult for one person to undertake *all* of these, hopefully anyone can try several of these resolutions at one time or a number of them throughout the year.



- Attend Mass once a week over and above weekend liturgies.
- Spend an hour (or any amount of time) in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament once a week.
- Pray the *Liturgy of the Hours* (the *Divine Office*) at least once a day.
- Read and meditate on a chapter of Scripture a day.
- Take up a devotion of the Church (e.g. Rosary, Stations, novena, other prayers, etc.) and pray it daily.
- Read a spiritual book once a month.
- Make a morning offering as you begin your day, then an examination of conscience as you end your day.
- Offer a prayer of blessing/thanksgiving before/after a meal.
- Take time to pray daily with your spouse/family.
- As an individual or a family, take time once a week to do some form of charitable work — visiting those who are homebound or in a nursing home, do some work for an elderly friend or neighbor, bring food to someone in need, etc.

This is not an exhaustive list, but hopefully it gives you an idea that the small things done with great love can make a world of difference — both in your life and the lives of others.

Do not try to overdo any of these, but build up to doing them on a regular basis, thus laying a reasonable foundation upon which to build. Enjoy doing these resolutions, and see what a blessing they are for you and others.

Let us pray that 2019 will be a year of grace and favor from God. I wish you and yours a very happy New Year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Jeremy Kucera,
Pastor



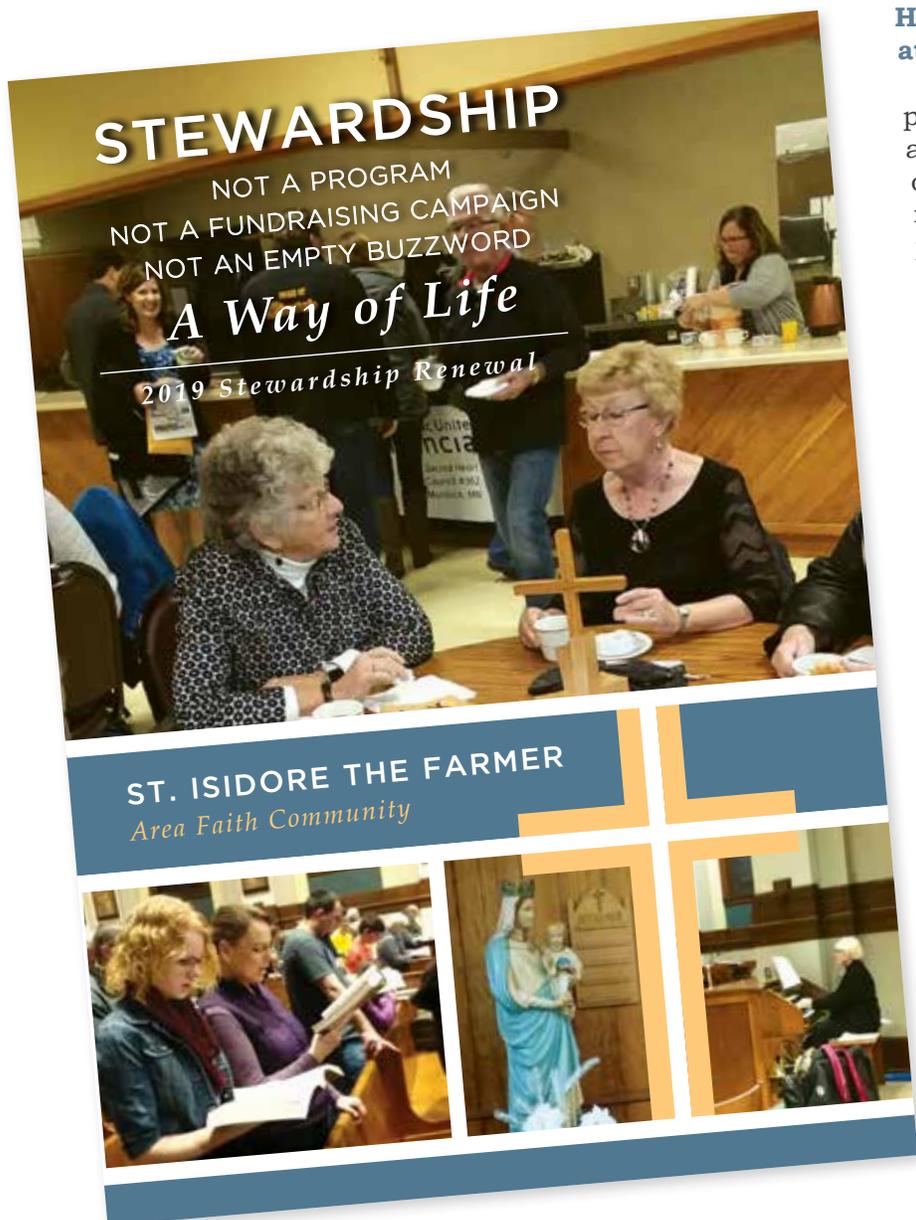
BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT O

What is a Stewardship Renewal?

This isn't a parish fundraiser – far from it. 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. It is the time we write down how we will support our St. Isidore the Farmer Area Faith Community.

Why should I fill out a commitment card?

Your Commitment Card allows you to make commitments to prayer, parish ministries, and offertory giving, or what we at St. Isidore call "time, talent, and treasure." There's a two-fold reason to complete your card. First, it is an excellent opportunity to move forward spiritually and personally. Second, when you fill out a card, our parish is much better able to manage our many volunteers and make budgeting decisions.



How many parish ministries are there at St. Isidore the Farmer?

"Ministry" is a general term for any parish group, organization, or regular activity. There are dozens of ministries in our parish. You can sign up for certain ministries, or re-commit yourself if you're already involved.

What if I sign up for a ministry, but later find I'm not very interested?

You are not making a solemn promise to participate in a particular ministry when you mark it on your commitment card. If you find that the parish group is different than you thought, or simply that their meeting time doesn't fit your schedule, you can change your mind. There are plenty of other ministries to consider.

I'm hesitant to make a firm financial pledge. What if I lose my job?

Your commitment card isn't a legal contract. If your circumstances change, your gift will change. In Scripture, we are asked to "give according to our means." So if you lose your job, you may be unable to give at the level you pledged. Likewise, if you get a promotion, you may be able to give more. That is why at St. Isidore, our standard of giving is based upon a percentage of income.

OUR STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

What happens if I don't fill out a commitment card?

Returning a card is an important part of being an active member of our Area Faith Community. If for some reason you lose your card, we'll send you a reminder letter with an extra commitment card. Please make every effort to return it!

TIME, TALENT & TREASURE

Please bring your Commitment Card to Mass on Commitment Sunday, January 26-27. How will you use your time, talent and treasure in our parish?

Stewardship of Time

Our definition of Stewardship of Time: Using my time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer, and quality time with friends and loved ones.

The bottom line about prayer: Without prayer, we cannot thrive spiritually. As Catholic Christians, it is a necessity to spend time each day speaking to God. This includes reading Scripture and saying prayers such as the Our Father and Hail Mary, but even more importantly, it should include a heart-to-heart conversation with Jesus. He wants us to bring him all our fears, longings, needs, and desires.

What kind of Time commitments should I make? Your commitment card lists several suggestions for how to spend time with God in prayer. Review your current prayer life and take a step forward. For instance, start having daily prayers with your children or spouse. Commit to praying the rosary on the way to work or reading scripture before bed each night.

Stewardship of Talent

Our definition of Stewardship of Talent: Using my God-given abilities to strengthen the Church and help others, especially through parish ministries and activities.

The bottom line about parish ministry: No Catholic Christian exists in a vacuum. Scripture makes it clear that we must function within the wider faith community, putting our gifts in the service of others. It's not enough to go to Sunday Mass; we need to be involved in parish life and ministry.

What kind of Talent commitments should I make? If you're not involved in anything in our parish, now is the perfect opportunity to take a step forward. Check out our commitment card for a list of ministries. If you're already involved, re-commit yourself to the important work you do. And if you feel God is calling you forward – sign up for something new!

Stewardship of Treasure

Our definition of Stewardship of Treasure: The wise and just management of my financial resources; giving a proportionate amount of my income to the parish.

The bottom line about financial support: We need to take seriously the Biblical concept of the tithe, and start giving based on a percentage of income. It's our responsibility to support the Church with our personal involvement *and* our financial support.

What kind of Treasure commitments should I make? Our goal in our Area Faith Community is to give five percent of income to the offertory. Grab a calculator and figure out your target gift based on your total household income. Then make a plan for increasing your gift incrementally to reach five percent. During our Stewardship Renewal, choose a weekly or monthly gift to the parish, and be faithful to it for the next year.

SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE FOLLOWING JESUS' CALL TO FEED HIS SHEEP IN MANY WAYS

Jesus said, "if you love me, feed my sheep." While it's certainly appropriate to interpret this idea literally, humans have many needs that go beyond just physical hunger. Our job as Christians is to be aware of these needs and do what we can to meet them in a way that points directly back to Jesus.

The Social Concerns Committee is a ministry that represents each parish in the Area Faith Community and reaches outside of our doors to provide for local families and parishioners in need.

"We try to assess needs in the Area Faith Community, but also look at the Church's more universal mission of looking at the needs of the poor and a lot of other issues that the Church and Pope Francis encourage us to consider, and perhaps do some activity that furthers that mission," says Social Concerns Committee member Paul Hayden.

Since 2015, the committee has worked with Fr. Jeremy to develop the Mercy Fund. Completely funded by donations, the Mercy Fund seeks out ways to assist parishioners who might find themselves facing a tough financial situation that cannot be helped by other local services like the Community Action Council or Salvation Army. And since 2015, parishioners have donated \$10,000.

"One fellow couldn't get to work because there was something wrong with his car, and they were able to get it fixed so he could work," Paul says of the types of things the Mercy Fund provides. "A couple instances were that people needed money for heating fuel. Maybe somebody who, for whatever reason, wasn't able to get

food was given a little money to tie them over. Most of the time it's minor things."

Yet, these minor things add up to something meaningful for a person in need. Committee member Carol Jensen says the projects are good for people and the parish as well.

"One of the things I think is good is that it's a joint effort between the members from all the different parishes, and I think that it is good to get feedback from the others so that we can try to work together and work for the common good of everybody," she says.

Paul says the Social Concerns Committee is also excited to assist with the Benson Public Schools' Benson Area Cares for Kids program, or BACK.

"Once a week, that organization meets at the building where the County Food Shelf is held," he says. "They get food products that are non-perishable. Once a week they have a crew come in that helps them package food that is then taken to the schools. We've had students apply to get one of these bags of food each week, no questions asked. Our committee signs up to help package those one month out of the year."

In the coming year, a Healing and Anointing Mass is planned during Lent that will include an opportunity for confessions, an Anointing with the Oil of the Sick for all in attendance, and a light lunch. Paul says the committee is also looking into hosting a winter grief and loss support group, as well as helping clergy develop a Stephen Ministry, which would provide emotional and spiritual support to those whose lives have been touched by ongoing illness or family crisis.

The committee is continually open to new members from all parishes. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at St. Francis. If you would like more information, please reach out to the parish office at 320-842-4271.

STAYING CONNECTED

Homebound and Nursing Home Visitation Ministry Helps Sick and Elderly Remain Part of Parish Family

When a person is sick or homebound, it's easy for them to feel disconnected from the Church. Physically prevented from attending Mass or parish events, they can feel forgotten and alone, no longer part of the community they once faithfully served. And as parishioner Chuck Koenigs points out, this is why it's so important that we bring them the Eucharist — the “source and summit of the Christian life” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1324).

“Fundamentally, the Eucharist is really central to the faith,” Chuck says. “So, in the case of those individuals of our parish who are unable to participate in the communal celebration of the Eucharist because of physical or mental limitations, we as a faith community want to make sure that they remain connected and that they receive the great benefits of this sacrament.”

Through the Homebound and Nursing Home Visitation Ministry, Chuck and his fellow ministers are privileged to bring our Eucharistic Lord to the sick and elderly of our faith community. Once individuals are identified, Communion is brought to their homes or assisted living facility roughly twice a month. This helps strengthen them during a time often filled with suffering and loneliness, reminding them of Christ and the entire community's love for them.

“The Church is our extended family and it's important for these people to remain connected to their faith,” Chuck says. “An important way to do this is through the sacramental life.”

Yet, the sick and homebound aren't the only ones who benefit from the ministry, says Chuck. Ministers often receive far more themselves through the great reverence and joy demonstrated by those they've come to serve. It rejuvenates their own faith, reminding them of how incredible of a gift the Eucharist truly is.

“It always seems like you get more out of it as a Eucharistic Minister than the people do,” Chuck says. “So many of these people are faith filled, and you just see how reverent they are. They are smiling

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(From left) communicant Rita Staton with Eucharistic Minister Mary Lou Minchow



Vicky Selix (standing) bringing Holy Communion to residents of a local assisted living facility

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WEEKEND MASS TIMES:

NOVEMBER - FEBRUARY

Saturday

5:00 p.m.

St. Francis in Benson

7:00 p.m.

*Sacred Heart in Murdock
(Spanish Mass)*

Sunday

8:30 a.m.

Sacred Heart, Murdock

10:30 a.m.

St. John, Appleton

Homebound and Nursing Home Visitation Ministry continued from page 7

and so eager to receive Jesus. As soon as the ritual starts, their entire demeanor changes. Some of them will even cry as they receive Holy Communion and it just touches your heart. That's why I keep doing it. It's such a great blessing and privilege."

Because our homebound numbers are continuously changing, the Homebound and Nursing Home Visitation Ministry relies on fellow parishioners to help notify them when someone is

in need of receiving Holy Communion.

"If you have a loved one at home or in the community who you think should be receiving Communion, please call and request that Communion be brought to them," Chuck says. "But even better, I'd encourage you to begin bringing Holy Communion to them yourself. It's such a blessing and it really strengthens the bond between those family members."

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Please call the office at 320-842-4271 if you know of someone unable to attend Mass. Better yet, says Chuck Koenigs, please consider becoming a minister yourself, helping us bring Christ to those in need!