

ST. ISIDORE THE FARMER AREA FAITH COMMUNITY



ST. BRIDGET



SACRED HEART



ST. FRANCIS



ST. MALACHY



VISITATION ORATORY



ST. JOHN

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 2

What Does Stewardship
Mean?

PAGE 3

Tuesday Adoration
*An Opportunity to Be in
Christ's Presence*

PAGE 4

A Life Built on
Faith and Service:
Meet the Wilts Family

PAGE 6

Mass Reverence and
Etiquette

PAGE 7

Exciting Changes Abound
in Our Faith Community's
Formation Program

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Introducing Our New Parish Newsletter!

Dear Parishioners,

Welcome to the first issue of
our new monthly parish
newsletter!

As our parish community continues to grow and develop stewardship as a way of life, we have recognized the need for increased communication. Through this newsletter, we hope to share stories that will help us all to better understand who we are as Catholics and what we are doing as individual members of Christ's family. In upcoming issues, we will focus on what's going on in the St. Isidore the Farmer Area Faith Community, and how those activities and events are changing hearts and minds and helping parishioners grow closer to Christ and each other. Each article will ultimately focus on Christ at work within our community through the stewardship way of life.

Our hope is that this newsletter will be a successful means for ongoing education and formation in our faith.



I pray it will be a vehicle through which you are informed and inspired to become more actively involved in the life of Christ and the parish.

Another way I hope to improve our parish's communication efforts

continued on back cover

WHAT DOES STEWARDSHIP MEAN?

What comes to mind when you hear the word “stewardship”?

Do you think of it as just another way to talk about money? Do you quickly dismiss it as a notion that has nothing to do with being Catholic?

Stewardship is actually a concept that is Scripturally based, and is absolutely vital to our life as Catholics. God tells us, in the very first book of the Old Testament, “Be fertile and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all the living things that move on the earth” (Gen 1:28).

What does that mean to us today? It simply means that God is telling us, “This is yours, so take care of it.” One of the first things God tells us to do is to be good stewards of the gifts He has entrusted to us!

The Old Testament is not the only place where we can find references to stewardship. Indeed, of the 36 parables in the New Testament, more than half of them deal with time, talent, possessions, or money. Therefore,

if Jesus spoke of stewardship that much, it should be a very important part of our lives!

As Catholics, we refer to the three facets of stewardship as “time, talent, and treasure.” Although these are three concrete ways to express and measure stewardship, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops tells us that stewardship is part of discipleship. Stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call in every aspect of our lives.

The Scriptures and Church traditions teach us one important point that cannot be overstated — that stewardship is primarily based on our need to give in gratitude, not on the Church’s need to receive. Of course, both the Catholic Church and our particular parish will always need money. However, we are not asked to give simply to defray costs and fund charitable programs. We are instead asked to remember our *need* to gratefully return a portion of our time, talent, and treasure to God, recognizing all that He has given to us.

It is important to remember that stewardship is a way of life, and not a program. True Catholic

stewardship involves an ongoing call to live as followers of Christ. It takes time to find and define personal goals. You can begin by examining your personal commitments to the parish. How do you live your faith in your daily life with your family and friends? How much time do you spend in daily prayer, going to Mass or being involved in parish ministries and activities? What percentage of your income should you give back to God every week? What talents do you have that could be used to strengthen our parish family?

In the coming months, we will be increasing and intensifying our education and communication on stewardship. We will be developing a better understanding of how stewardship is a way of responding to God’s call to discipleship. And with God’s help, changes will occur in each of our hearts as we devote ourselves to a stewardship renewal within our parish. Examine how you are currently responding to God’s call to stewardship. If God called you home tomorrow, would He proclaim, “Well done, my good and faithful servant”?

*The Old Testament is not the only place where we can find references to **stewardship**. Indeed, of the 36 parables in the New Testament, more than half of them deal with **time, talent, possessions or money**. Therefore, if Jesus spoke of stewardship that much, it should be a **very important** part of our lives!*

TUESDAY ADORATION

An Opportunity to Be in Christ's Presence

Some people love to pray outside. Some enjoy the peacefulness of a comfortable chair, at home. Others find time to talk with God when they're driving. Then, there are those whose favorite way to connect with the Lord is in Eucharistic Adoration. And while the Lord loves to hear from His children regardless of their location, there is certainly something special about being in His Presence.

Every Tuesday, St. Francis hosts a Holy Hour after the 8:30 morning Mass. During this hour of Eucharistic Adoration, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is also available. On the second Tuesday of the month, adoration lasts from after Mass, until 5 p.m.

Parishioner Marge Newell has been attending the Tuesday Holy Hour for several years.

"I just love to pray before the Blessed Sacrament," Marge says. "After the Mass, it's my favorite devotion. I have great faith in the Blessed Sacrament, and I love the Blessed Sacrament. It gives me spiritual strength, which I need."

"Adoration slows you down, it clears your mind," says parishioner Bill Luzum. "If you're always running here and there and everywhere, you don't have time to think. [Adoration] gives you a chance to listen to God, too, as well as talk. It gets you thinking about spiritual things instead of worldly things."

Both Marge and Bill find that spending quiet time in God's presence has strengthened their faith and relationship with Him.

"To really think about God, you have to be in silence," Marge says. "You need private time to be with our Lord."

"I don't pray at home as much as I should," she adds. "It's easier to focus in the church or adoration. I miss it when I'm not able to do it."

"It helps you sort out your life a little bit," adds Bill, who often brings spiritual reading to adoration. "It gives you a chance to think uninterrupted and



clears your mind and resets your goals."

With the exception of second Tuesdays, parishioners are also encouraged to gather with other members of the parish for a time of fellowship following the Holy Hour, giving people a chance to connect not only with God, but also with other parishioners.

"We have conversations, sometimes about spiritual things and sometimes about fun things," Marge says. "I think that social hour is a very good thing. Everybody is welcome. I live alone and I like to socialize."

"You don't really get to know people when you just say 'hi,'" Bill says. "This gives you a chance to visit a little longer."

Marge encourages others to consider coming to Eucharistic Adoration, during a Tuesday Holy Hour, or on second Tuesdays, when adoration lasts throughout the day.

"If you think an hour is too long, just go and spend 15 minutes," she says. "You'll soon want to stay longer than your 15 minutes. Once you start coming before the Blessed Sacrament to pray, you're going to want to do it more often."

If you would like more information on the Tuesday Holy Hours or Eucharistic Adoration, please call the parish office at 320-842-4271.

A Life Built on Faith and Service:



The Wilts family — (from left) Elizabeth, Katie, Gina, Harmon and Hannah

Long before our parish had a word for Stewardship, Gina and Harmon Wilts were learning to serve God and His people. Growing up at Sacred Heart in Murdock, both Gina and Harmon were blessed with strong role models in living the faith. Married in our parish in 1992, this couple has continued to remain active in church life ever since.

Gina — a religious education teacher, song leader and member of the Council of Catholic Women — traces her commitment to parish life back to the influence of her mother and grandmother.

“Practicing stewardship is following the examples of my grandma and my mom,” she says. “They were heavily involved in religious education — they were my religion teachers, and they paved the way and showed me the path. They gave of their time to the youth of our church. So for me, it was learning by doing and following the example in front of me.”

Harmon’s parents also raised him in the Church, and he credits one of his childhood priests with instilling in him a strong faith and spirit of service.

“Our priest, Fr. Diehl, taught the sixth-grade religious education every year,” Harmon says. “The way he was able to articulate and share the faith with us still stands out to me. I think that’s where I really started to learn about Christ and the Lord and the very basics. Sixth grade is where the basis of my guiding principles started, and they would move forward from there.”

Like Gina, Harmon continues to follow the examples set for him early in life. Currently, he serves as a Eucharistic Minister, a lector and a parish trustee. He feels honored to have been a part of the Area Faith Community Council when St. Isidore the Farmer was created to help our parishes work together and meet our local needs.

Over the years, Gina and Harmon have truly enjoyed serving alongside their fellow

MEET THE WILTS FAMILY

parishioners from all of our churches.

“St. Isidore brings a whole bunch of people from different areas together,” Gina says. “It brings you in contact with people with the same values. And we are just continuing to grow. I think that’s what it’s all about — connecting people to God, and continuing that growth.”

The strong faith of the people of St. Isidore the Farmer also inspires Harmon to continue to be involved in parish life.

“There are a lot of passionate people here that really care about their religion, their church and their parish community,” he says. “It’s fun to be with people that have that kind of passion for religion. There are people that we can talk to about some difficult issues, and they’ll always be open-minded and listen.”

For Gina and Harmon, raising their three daughters in the faith has always been a top priority. As a result, all of the Wilts children have continued to participate in the Church well into their young adulthood — Hannah is active in the parish where she lives, Elizabeth continues to attend Mass as a student at the University of Minnesota, and Katie returned to Sacred Heart following her graduation from college in the spring.

Reflecting on the reasons she chose to return to our parish, Katie points to the same kindness and passion that her parents find in the parishioners here.

“Honestly, the people are what keep me coming here,” Katie says. “They say it takes a village to raise a child, and I think that was definitely true for me growing up. The people that are a part of St. Isidore are kind of my family, too.”

In thanksgiving for a childhood rooted in the faith, Katie now shares her gifts with our parish by playing the piano at Mass and helping out with the youth group.

“I don’t think I always realized what a blessing and a privilege it was [to be raised in the faith],” she says. “After going to college, I now know that there are so many people in the world who are lonely. They’re searching for someone to

love them, and they don’t realize the worth that the Lord gave them. I’m grateful that I grew up knowing I am a beloved daughter of the Lord, and I hope to help others to know that about themselves.”

Gina and Harmon consider their daughters’ strong faith lives to be their greatest reward as parents, and a reaffirmation of their own commitment to parish life. Even with their busy schedules — both work full-time in addition to running a 1,400-acre farm — the couple has always made active participation in the Church a top priority.

Reflecting on the countless blessings of a faith-centered life, Gina and Harmon are incredibly thankful for the opportunities St. Isidore the Farmer gives them to serve God and His people.

“When you are doing God’s work and helping people, you experience a fulfillment from within,” Harmon says. “Working toward heaven becomes pretty rewarding, and it makes for a fulfilling journey on earth.”

“St. Isidore brings a whole bunch of people from different areas together. It brings you in contact with people with the same values. And we are just continuing to grow. I think that’s what it’s all about — connecting people to God, and continuing that growth.” — Gina Wilts

MASS REVERENCE AND ETIQUETTE

For many of us, when we are invited to a wedding, one of our first considerations is “what am I going to wear?” We wouldn’t think of showing up at a formal event in our workout clothes. How many of us search for just the right outfit to wear to our annual office party or on a date? Compare that to how much thought we put into what we wear to Mass on Sunday.

How we dress for an occasion indicates the importance that we place upon that particular celebration. At Mass, we encounter God through the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Dressing appropriately for Mass is one way that we show respect both for God and for our faith family. And this respect is important at all Masses – no matter what time of day or night.

Think about what you are teaching your children when you all wear your “Sunday

clothes” to Mass. You are reminding them that Mass is a special celebration. After all, we are going to Jesus’ house.

Some people may quickly point out that Mass shouldn’t be a fashion show – a place to show off your finery – and they are right! We also know that some parishioners come to Mass on their way home from work, and they certainly should not feel embarrassed about arriving at Mass in their work clothes. And no one should ever stay away from Mass because of simplicity of clothing.

But one rule should apply in all instances – our attire at Mass should always be modest. Our clothing should never distract others from what we are gathered together to celebrate – the life, death and resurrection of our Lord.

The celebration of Mass is always a holy occasion and thus should be treated in the most holy manner – in body, mind and spirit.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR’S MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve, Dec. 24

4 p.m. — St. Francis in Benson

6:30 p.m. — St. John in Appleton

*8 p.m. — Sacred Heart in Murdock
(bilingual Mass)*

Christmas Day, Dec. 25

9 a.m. — St. Francis in Benson

9 a.m. — St. John in Appleton

Feast of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Monday, Dec. 31

5 p.m. — St. John in Appleton

Tuesday, Jan. 1

8:30 a.m. — Sacred Heart in Murdock

10:30 a.m. — St. Francis in Benson



EXCITING CHANGES AROUND IN OUR FAITH COMMUNITY'S FORMATION PROGRAM

Youth are the future of the Church — we've often encountered this phrase over the years, reminding us of the vital importance of forming young people in the faith. Yet, these words can be misleading in that sometimes they lead us to forget about how important parish youth are *now*, in the present moment. If we want our children to grow and become future Church and community leaders, says St. John parishioner Angela Conn, then we need to continuously do our part to ensure that they feel welcomed and a true part of the faith community.

"We want to make St. John's their home, a place where they feel comfortable coming," Angela says. "I want to make it a place where as they grow older they know they can always come back — to help our children know that they are always supported by our faith community."

That's why Angela is excited to be part of the changes which recently occurred to St. Isidore the Farmer Area Faith Community's Faith Formation program. Previously, Faith Formation classes were only available to parishioners monthly in Benson, Minn. Now, thanks to the generosity and support of many volunteers and parents, St. John's Catholic Church is able to offer religious instruction weekly at the Education Center in Appleton.

"This gives a much easier access for families and provides a really great opportunity for our children to become part of the Church community," Angela says.

Kindergarten through sixth-grade students meet every Wednesday afternoon from 3:15-4:30 p.m., while seventh through 11th-grade youth gather from 7-8 p.m. Classes cover a wide variety of topics such as prayer, sacramental formation and morality, while also providing numerous opportunities for youth to put faith into action through hands-on projects.

"We have a Christmas program that is coming



Parish kids put faith into action by creating food care packages for those in need.

up and we're also going to be working with Meal on Wheels and collaborating with local nursing homes," Angela says. "To me, that's the great blessing of the program as we get to watch the students learn and grow in their faith each week — to see them really implement the faith in the things that they say and do."

While these changes are still in the early stages, Angela says there has already been a tremendous amount of support and enthusiasm. Angela is deeply grateful for the amazing volunteers who have stepped up to become catechists and assistants and is eager to see how the program continues to expand and evolve in future months.

"I think it really gives us more of a sense of community by getting families and children more involved," Angela says. "We're hoping to do things like have Youth Masses in the future, getting our kids involved in the liturgy by ushering, lecturing and serving. There is lots of potential for future growth and it's just all really exciting."

Though the school year is already well underway, new students and adult volunteers are always welcome. For more information, please contact Angela Conn at aconn06@gmail.com.

508 13th St. N, Benson, MN 56215
(320) 842-4271
www.stisidorethefarmerafc.org
office@stisidorethefarmerafc.org

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

Introducing Our New Parish Stewardship Newsletter!

continued from front cover

is through a comprehensive parish survey that will be conducted in Spring 2019. Through the survey, I want to hear from you regarding our parish and its future. A survey will be mailed to each home, and then I will ask you to take the time to fill it out and return it as soon as possible. Your input will be very important, and it will give the Area Faith Community Council and me a better understanding of your thoughts about our parish.

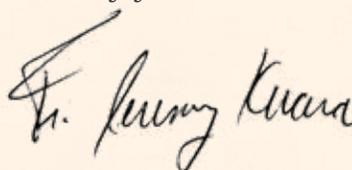
Perhaps the most important next step in our stewardship journey will occur in January 2019, when we conduct our Annual Stewardship Renewal. The Renewal is the time each year when we ask each other to re-prioritize the way we use God's gifts in the Church. It is the time we write down how we will become more devoted to Christ over the next year with our commitments of time (using our time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer, and quality time with friends and loved ones); talent (using our God-given gifts to strengthen the Church through service to parish ministries and other activities),

and treasure (the wise and just management of our financial resources; giving a proportionate amount of my income to the parish).

As we strive to develop stewardship as a way of life in the St. Isidore the Farmer Area Faith Community, the support and involvement of each individual parishioner is necessary to sustain the life of our parish. All of you have a place here, and all of you have a role to fill in the life of the parish as we live our lives as disciples of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit renew and refresh all of us as we work together to build our parish family through the use of our time, talent and treasure.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Jeremy Kucera,
Pastor