

ST. CLARE *of* ASSISI PARISH

January 2015

*Celebrating Our Community of Faith,
Knowledge and Service*

Catholic Schools Week 2015

What kind of school community is St. Victor?

It's a community that imparts the core values of faith and service through a strong Catholic education. And that's just what we'll be celebrating during Catholic Schools Week!

"Each year, as a member of the National Catholic Education Association, we join in this nationwide celebration," says Principal Joe Peters. "It allows us a chance to showcase who we are, and to celebrate that we are different than other schools in our community."

For the past 30 years, Catholic schools across the country have marked their calendars for this annual week of school spirit, service and fun. Catholic Schools Week highlights the strong education and values that Catholic schools provide to their students. As the week approaches, everyone at St. Victor looks forward to celebrating everything that Catholic education has to offer.

"We are able to foster and grow the faith on a daily basis, and we are able to develop a community that is based on the Gospel message of Jesus," Mr. Peters says. "Catholic education allows us to preach the Gospel in an environment that also emphasizes academic success. We are able to create future leaders in our church, to ensure that the message of the Gospel of Jesus continues on. We are also blessed to have Catholic School education opportunities that extend beyond our own St. Victor School. Several families from our parish choose to send their children to St. Anthony Academy or Edgewood in Madison, as well as, the Aquin Catholic System in Freeport. It is great that our families have these opportunities to continue their child's Catholic education experience. We celebrate all of these schools this week as well."



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The Seventh Annual Mardi Gras Gala and Benefit Auction

1760 14th Street, Monroe, WI 53566
Phone: (608) 325-9506
www.stclaregreencounty.org

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STEWARDSHIP

New Year's Resolutions and Stewardship

The beginning of the year is a popular time for personal re-assessment. The earth has finished one more revolution around the sun. The days are shorter, and an evening of introspection seems more inviting. Somehow, when we take down the old calendar and tack up the new, we sense an opportunity to make a fresh start.

To make the best of this opportunity — which, truthfully, exists in June just as it does in January — it is useful to make firm commitments. It's even more useful to write them down. These resolutions, kept in a desk drawer or on the refrigerator door, are a "hard copy" of our best intentions for self-improvement. They're signposts that redirect our lives towards good, and towards God.

New Year's resolutions are often focused on personal health — losing weight, relaxing more or smoking less. It is certainly important, of course, to take good care of

our bodies. But Christianity offers us a fuller concept of self-improvement. St. Paul reminds us that both the body and the soul need an exercise program. In fact, every aspect of our persons — physical, mental, spiritual, emotional — can benefit from an annual self-audit.

Some people have taken to heart this multifaceted concept of the self, and each year make one resolution for each area. For instance, one could resolve to join a Rosary prayer group to work on spirituality, or take a continuing education course to build mental skills. Still, others use the three theological virtues — faith, hope and love — to guide their resolution-making process.

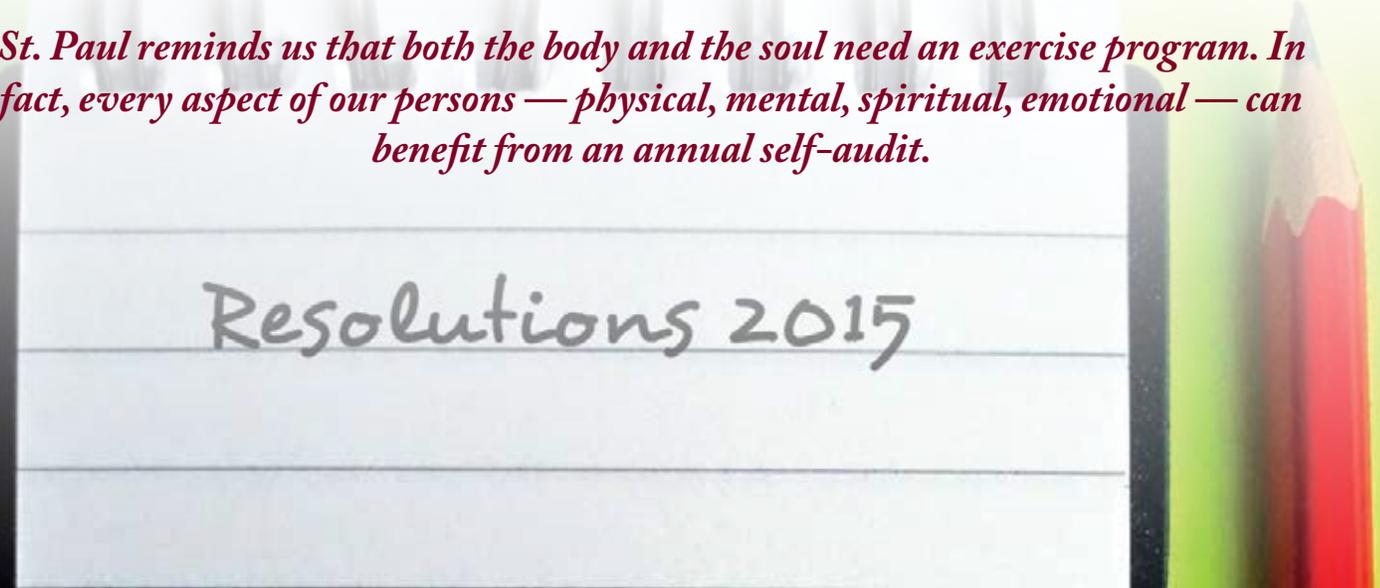
By now you may have discerned a similarity between New Year's resolutions and stewardship commitments. First, we use a similar method to think about stewardship, by breaking it down into more specific concepts — time, talent

and treasure. Second, to become better stewards, we write down our commitments. We record our good intentions to clarify exactly what they are — and to remind us of our commitment on the evenings when the Rosary group interferes with a bowl game.

Any serious commitment shares the same components — it is specific and it is written. From marriages to mortgages, treaties to trades, serious resolutions are spelled out both literally and figuratively.

But even more important than the methodology of a commitment is the heart of the person who makes it. Even the most well-written job descriptions are useless unless there is someone to do the job well! Let us pray that this new year is a time of grace and wisdom for those of us who seek to recommit our lives to our family, our parish and our God.

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Resolutions 2015

A Letter From Our Pastor

Are We Prepared to Match Jesus' Gifts to Us?

Dear Parishioners,

Another Christmas season has come to a close, and for most of us, it was another wonderful season filled with extraordinary gift giving. Now, with a new year upon us, I would like to turn our focus to an extraordinary type of gift.

This gift is not the traditional “present” we give to loved ones. No, this gift is ongoing and never-ending, bearing a value far beyond the realm of our comprehension.

This is the gift of the Eucharist. “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Those are words which we associate with the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. They are words that carry a meaning beyond our abilities to really appreciate them at times. Christ’s eternal gift to us calls us to share it with others. We need to strive in this new year to receive the Lord with humility and love, and then to pass that on to our families, our friends, our faith community, and all those with whom we may come in contact.

It is through the Eucharist that we become one with the Lord. It is through Him that we receive the strength to be good stewards. We need to receive this incredible gift and share the Good News with all around us. When we approach the Eucharist, we must always keep in mind the real presence of Jesus Christ, and that in itself is a humbling experience.

In addition to the Eucharist, we continually receive the gifts of time and talents. A new year reminds us of these gifts. Although each of us may receive different gifts, we all receive an equal gift of time. If you are making resolutions, a good one might be to find the time to pray and to reflect and to share our gifts with others. Each of us needs to set aside time each day for God. In fact, each of us should endeavor to set aside multiple times a day to pray to and to listen to God.

Are we prepared to take the risk in using our time, talents and resources to build the Kingdom of God? That is the true determination of stewardship — whether we accept this risk with the kind of trust in God to which we are called. Our faith is measured by the risks we are willing to take to live it out. Christ Himself risked it all by going to the Cross and models true sacrifice for all of us. Through that sacrifice, He continues to give us the greatest gift of all — the Eucharist. We need to accept that gift and use it to fulfill our own lives and the lives of those around us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Larry M. Bakke
Pastor



Are we prepared to take the risk in using our time, talents and resources to build the Kingdom of God? That is the true determination of stewardship — whether we accept this risk with the kind of trust in God to which we are called.

Youth Enjoy Formation, as Ministry Y

So how did our high school students spend their time this past autumn? By living out the stewardship way of life, sharing in formation and fellowship – and, of course, having plenty of fun!

Our St. Clare of Assisi Youth Ministry program officially began on October first this year with one of Jane McAuliffe's famous Biblical Scavenger Hunts, as the students were given clues found in Scripture and went on the hunt in groups. Then, the Youth Ministry held its Halloween party on Wednesday, Oct. 29. The students spent the evening playing games and enjoying refreshments, while Garret Martin, our Coordinator of Youth Ministry, used the opportunity to teach the kids about the saints.

"The Halloween party was a really fun time," Garret says. "We had some Halloween and fall-themed snacks and played some games, including a mummy wrapping game with toilet paper that was really fun. Then we ended the night talking about saints and All Souls Day and how that corresponds with the celebration of Halloween."

One of the biggest events in which the Youth Ministry participates each year is the Pancake Breakfast, which took place on Nov. 23. The breakfast provides our youth with an opportunity to live out stewardship by serving others, while sharing in fellowship with other students and members of other ministries.

For this breakfast, they worked with the Catholic Daughters of America. The Youth Ministry hosted and served the Pancake Breakfast, while the CDA ran their Holiday Shopping Spree.

The students prepared for the breakfast on Saturday, and then arrived at the church at 7 a.m. on Sunday to bake all of the food and finish the preparations in time to serve parishioners after the 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Masses. The students' parents and families are always encouraged to come and help with this event, and it has become a wonderful family activity for both those serving and those who attend the breakfast.

"Parishioners come and go through the shopping spree, have some breakfast, and spend time together," Garret says. "It's a free-will donation, so it's affordable for large families, and parishioners can choose to support Youth Ministry with a donation they are comfortable with. The main purpose of the breakfast is to get our youth involved in service to the parish. It's a fun event for them – they enjoy being able to make food and see how they can get involved in the parish. It's also a way for us to raise money for the Youth Ministry."

The students choose a charity or a cause that is important to them, and donate a portion of the money they raise to that charity. The breakfast is a well-known event for our parish, and attendance is always high.

In December, the students participated in a number of service projects throughout our community. These projects included helping out with the Apostolate to the Handicapped Christmas Party and preparing cards and goodies for college students returning home for the holidays. In addition, some of the students have joined with the Confirmation class to provide cookies for the homebound in our parish.



Fellowship and Service Year Kicks Off

These many opportunities for fun, fellowship, formation, and service have had a positive impact on the youth, as well as on Garret as he works with students in the program.

"I'm always excited to see youth gather in community, especially in a faith-filled community," he says. "I've talked to a couple of them about how impactful this community has been for them. I'm just excited and blessed to have the opportunity to help facilitate an environment where that can happen. It's been a great opportunity to get to know the youth, and share with them

the experience that I've had in my faith and how God has transformed my life and my heart. It's exciting for me to kind of bond with them in that. Not to give them any sort of agenda or list of rules they have to follow to become a 'good Catholic person,' but to really share with them in faith and in the life of Christ."

There are many more exciting activities planned for our students in the new year! The students have regular meetings on Wednesday nights at 7:30 p.m. Please contact Garret Martin at 608-325-9506 for more information.



Catholic Schools Week 2015 *continued from front cover*



This year, Catholic Schools Week will take place from Jan. 24-30, following the theme "Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service." St. Victor will kick off the week with an opening liturgy, followed by a special school dance that the students always look forward to. The rest of the week will be filled with various fun activities and events that highlight both spiritual and academic learning.

"We will have a few dress-up days, such as 'Wear Your Favorite Team Colors' or 'Dress as Your Favorite Teacher,' as well as our 'Battle of the Books' competition," Mr. Peters says. "We also try to do an outreach program to our seminarians called 'Skype with the Seminarians.'"

Other activities include a canned food drive, an alumni guest speaker event, a Teacher Switch Day, a Teacher Appreciation Lunch, a Bingo night, and a school Mass followed by an ice cream social.

Parishioners and school families can also be a part of Catholic Schools Week.

"Parents are invited to participate in many of the activities, and parish members are invited to the kick-off liturgy as well as other activities throughout the week," Mr. Peters says.

For more information about Catholic Schools Week 2015, or to get involved and help out, please contact St. Victor School at 608-325-3395.

The Great Catholic Educator: *St. Thomas Aquinas*

Before Thomas Aquinas was even born, a holy hermit told his mother he was to be more learned and holy than any other person of his time. As a young boy, he was devoted to prayer and meditation, and his intellectual gifts were quickly recognized. When he was about 11 years old, he was sent to the University of Naples, and about five years later, he became a Dominican friar.

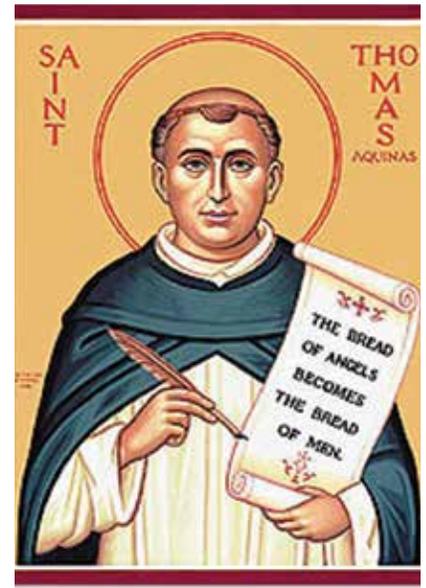
Thomas' parents were Italian nobility and were not enthusiastic about Thomas' choice of vocation. They went so far as to have his brothers capture him while he was en route to Rome, and they held him prisoner for two years in an effort to destroy his vocation and his virtue. After the family made one particularly heinous attempt at breaking Thomas' faith and spirit, he begged God to give him integrity of mind and body, and he was miraculously given the girldle and grace of purity for the rest of his life. This gift almost certainly was essential to the remarkable clarity of his intellect.

After he regained his freedom,

Thomas received the best education that was available during a time in human history that arguably represents the best the world has ever offered to scholars and philosophers. His greatest works arise from his total focus on knowing and understanding God, and revealing as clearly as possible the Truth of God to others. He showed that faith and reason are not in conflict, but exist in harmony.

Thomas' *Summa Theologica* uses philosophical principles presented in scientific form to systematically explain Christian theology. It was his last work and was left unfinished. Thomas stopped writing after he experienced an unusually long vision on Dec. 6, 1273. When he was urged to finish his *Summa*, he stated that he could no longer write, for the secrets he had been shown during his vision made all he had written "seem as straw." He died three months later.

Thomas composed more than 60 works. His powers of synthesis were truly extraordinary. He was able to sift through all that he read, distill the truth, and summarize

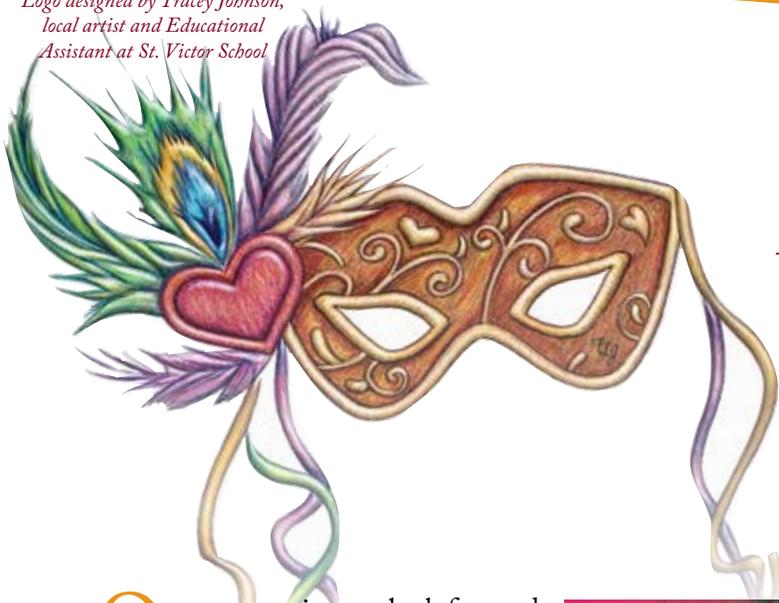


his conclusions simply, clearly and briefly. His writing is of such genius that it transcends style and art in the beauty of its truth. His works are as relevant today as they were to the 13th century. His principles offer a remedy to such evils as socialism, communism, nihilism, as well as pantheism and spiritism.

Thomas was canonized in 1323, and was declared a Doctor of the Universal Church in 1567. In 1879, Leo XIII declared Thomas Aquinas "the prince and master of all scholastic doctors," and in 1880, the same pontiff designated Thomas as patron of all Catholic universities, colleges and schools throughout the world. We celebrate St. Thomas Aquinas' feast day on Jan. 28.

Thomas' greatest works arise from his total focus on knowing and understanding God, and revealing as clearly as possible the Truth of God to others. He showed that faith and reason are not in conflict, but exist in harmony.

*Logo designed by Tracey Johnson,
local artist and Educational
Assistant at St. Victor School*



*An Opportunity to Share in Plenty of
Fun While Supporting St. Victor School*

The Seventh Annual Mardi Gras Gala and Benefit Auction

Our community can look forward to food, fun and fellowship at a favorite annual event, all while helping St. Victor School meet important needs that will benefit our children! As second-grade teacher and St. Victor parent Lisa DeMuth notes, supporting the Mardi Gras Gala and Benefit Auction – held at Turner Hall on Saturday, Feb. 14 – is essential to helping the staff continue to provide quality education.

“The Mardi Gras Committee is very grateful for all of the support local businesses and parishioners have provided [in] the past six years,” Mrs. DeMuth says. “Their generosity has allowed us to provide a quality educational experience.”

The gala evening includes appetizers, drinks, dinner, games and entertainment, as well as the silent and live auctions.

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– Mrs. Lisa DeMuth, second-grade teacher and St. Victor parent



“One of the games includes a raffle of a heart-shaped diamond,” Mrs. DeMuth says. “We’ll be following a Mardi Gras theme, but there are some touches that are a nod to Valentine’s Day, and the heart-shaped diamond is one.”

The auctions are sure to ramp up excitement with vacation packages and various services and products from Monroe.

“All the classrooms plan a project for the auction,” Mrs. DeMuth says. “It’s something the students have made, and they auction it off.

We have things like bookshelves, or a special chair they have created. Another prize is ‘Principal for a Day,’ and if the parents win it, their child is principal for the day.”

Mrs. DeMuth and her committee of five other volunteers have been working since June to pull all the details together to make this a successful fundraiser for the school. The committee is made up of parents of St. Victor students, several of whom are also school staff. Mrs. DeMuth also notes that one member is a parishioner who has no children in school, but wanted to become involved.

“All the work is divided up,” she says. “It’s the major fundraiser for the school that is a significant part of our annual budget. It generates more than \$30,000 that goes toward a number of goals for our school.”

When our students celebrate National Catholic Schools Week, proceeds from the gala will help provide

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Mardi Gras Gala *continued from page 7*

supplies for community-based service projects held during the week. Students in the third through fifth grades can have a swimming program and water safety course, while our fine arts and foreign languages programs are enriched – all thanks to Mardi Gras Gala and Benefit Auction support.

Money raised by the Mardi Gras event can also help provide updates to the school library, and can fund family nights and reading contests. Other projects that benefit from the event proceeds include the installation of a sound system for the school gymnasium to be used for performances and assemblies; help in funding our school-wide positive behavior intervention system, which focuses on highlighting our students who work hard to be the best they can for our school community; and the continuing updates to technology such as computers, software and iPads so our students are best prepared for the future.

Tickets for the Seventh Annual Mardi Gras Gala and Benefit Auction are on sale through the school office



at 608-325-3395. The cost for the event is \$60 per person, and the price includes dinner and drink tickets. To learn more about this wonderful event, please visit the school website at www.stvictormonroe.org/index.cfm/school/mardi-gras/. We hope to see you there!