

ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

March 2015

Baking Ministry Sweetens Meeting Agendas

If, as the old saying goes, an army marches on its stomach, the new Baking Ministry at St. Clare makes sure that those involved in parish activities won't have to carry on without good things to eat to sustain them!

Lonna Mayer heads up the new ministry, having been asked to serve as its coordinator several months ago.

"So many activities happen after school or work, and people didn't have a chance to get something to eat," she says. "The parish center employees were providing some treats. It was thought it would be better to coordinate treats for special functions. I was called, and I said 'Yes.'"

Lonna, who herself enjoys baking, began contacting prospective bakers before the annual Stewardship Renewal was released, and she had some success lining up volunteers. But after the Stewardship Renewal, more than 20 parishioners indicated on their commitment cards that they would be willing to get involved with this ministry and provide treats.

Lonna has been given a schedule of upcoming events, and with her list of volunteers in



Karen Anderson delivers baked goods for the evening RCLA class

hand, she can contact those who are available to help.

Lonna says, "I go down my list and call the members to see if they can deliver treats for that special function. And treats are whatever they want to make – bars, cookies. I know one time, someone made homemade lemon bars and they

- 2 *Stewardship*
The Wise Men's
Gifts Symbolize Our
Lenten Obligations
- 3 The Joy of Lent
- 4 Small Group
Individual Work
Helpers Greatly
Benefit School
- 6 Reflections on Our
St. Clare of Assisi
Parish Survey 2014
- 8 Holy Week & Easter
Schedule

Stewardship

The Wise Men's Gifts Symbolize Our Lenten Obligations

We experience great joy when we celebrate the coming of the Magi at Epiphany each year. For many of us, it is the completion of Christmas. Yet, the gifts offered by the Magi — gold, frankincense and myrrh — can be a guide for us as we plan our Lenten observances this year.

It may seem strange to connect the joyful celebration of Epiphany with the penitential season of Lent. Yet, our spiritual life should not be divided into separate bits having no connection with each other. In the same way, the Church's liturgical year should also flow from one season to another. The different feasts and seasons certainly have different emphases, but they are intended to build on each other. So let's see if we can connect what the Magi gave Jesus with what we're going to offer Him this Lent.

The basic ingredients for our Lenten rule normally come from what are termed the Three Notable Duties — prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These in turn come from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

How do we connect the wise men's gifts with the notable duties? Actually, what the gifts symbolize matches up surprisingly well.

Frankincense is the basic ingredient in the incense used in the worship of God, in the ancient world and in the Church today. Offering it to Jesus

points out His divine nature, and so it symbolizes prayer. Our Lenten rule needs to include prayer and worship. Of course, we are bound to worship at Sunday Mass year-round. Maybe during Lent, we might add a weekday Mass. Perhaps we can increase the time we devote to private prayer at home or at adoration. Devotional reading from the Bible or another appropriate book can be added. And don't forget the possibility of adding family devotions during Lent, so the whole family prays together.

When we offer our gold to Christ to build His Church and to help His poor, we are engaged in almsgiving. While giving from the treasure God has entrusted to us is a duty throughout the whole year, maybe this Lent we can practice being a little more generous than usual. If our giving is a thankful response to the gift of eternal life that God has given us, we will find that the giving is indeed a means of grace.

For centuries, myrrh has been associated with fasting. Although myrrh comes from the same family of plants as frankincense, it has a more pungent scent and bitter taste. In the ancient world, it was regularly used in embalming. Generations of theological writers have seen the gift of myrrh as a foreshadowing of Christ's sufferings. And fasting strengthens us in holiness and prepares us to come into God's presence

after our own deaths. St. Thomas Aquinas himself linked myrrh with repentance and fasting when he wrote that myrrh represents the penance by which we preserve our souls from the corruption of sin.

Fasting may be the most difficult of the three notable duties for modern Americans. After all, most of the advertising and many of the magazine articles we see are devoted to making us more, not less, comfortable. We usually think of fasting only under the heading of dieting to lose weight. Instead, try to think of fasting as a way to become more spiritually fit. Body and spirit affect each other. The whole sacramental system is built on the truth that we can receive spiritual grace through material things and physical actions. Our specific requirements of fasting are limited — abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent, and a reduction in the quantity of food we eat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. But discipline of our physical bodies for our spiritual well-being does not have to be limited to Lent!

Gold, frankincense and myrrh were indeed valuable gifts for the wise men to present to the Child Jesus. When we look at their symbolism, we can see their relationship to the three notable duties of almsgiving, prayer and fasting. What gifts are we going to offer to Jesus this Lent?



A Letter From Our Pastor

The Joy of Lent

Dear Parishioners,

Have you ever thought about the joy in sacrifice that Lent provides? Most of us don't delight in sacrifice; in fact, in our daily lives we often do our best to avoid challenges and practices that push us outside of our comfort zones.

In Christianity, there is a beautiful irony between joy and sacrifice, and we are presented with a wonderful opportunity to embrace this in a unique way during Lent. In his 2014 Lenten message, Pope Francis shared, "Lent is a fitting time for self-denial; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty."

While giving up sweets in favor of healthy snacks for Lent is a common and noble endeavor, the goal of Lent should not only be a spiritual excuse to lose weight! In choosing acts of self-denial, we are saying "no" to things in order to get into the practice of saying "no" when inclined towards sin, ultimately deepening our faith and our relationship with the Lord. Victory can be found when we deny ourselves and pick up our crosses and hardships in order to grow closer to Christ!

Therein lies the joy. When we grow closer to God by denying our will, we say "yes" to a life of abundance with Him. Our God is a benevolent God; He will not hold back His grace from those who honor Him and choose challenging things to grow and give Him glory. Christ even tells us Himself, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Without question, Lent is a time for conscious penitence and for spiritual preparation for Easter. And, it is important to remember that God loves us whether we make Lenten changes or not. At the same time, Lent provides us an opportunity to make God a greater part of our life, and to take our faith to new levels. Stewardship is a God-centered way of life — a spiritual way of living that, above all, acknowledges God's presence in all we do.

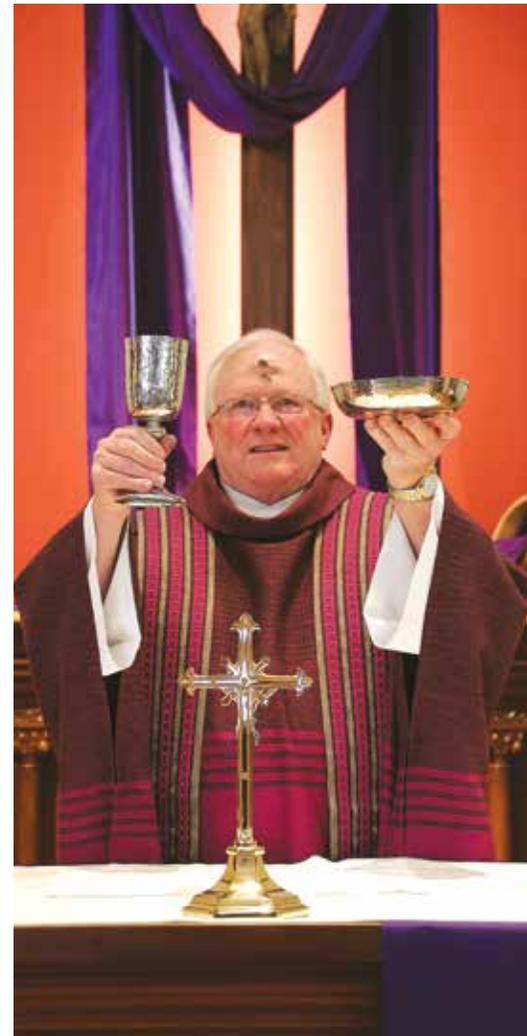
Lent is a time for each and every one of us to do more than simply deny ourselves; we need to welcome God into our lives in greater ways, so that when we get to Holy Week and Easter, we have an even greater appreciation for the sacrifice the Lord made for us. Talk about pure joy!

May you and your loved ones enjoy a holy and joyous Lenten journey, and a blessed Easter.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Larry M. Bakke
Pastor



*May you and your loved ones enjoy a
holy and joyous Lenten journey, and a
blessed Easter.*

Small Group Individual Greatly Benefit

Catholic education is an incredible resource for faithful families. It provides an environment where children not only receive a quality academic education, but also receive formation and education in different aspects of the Catholic faith. However, Catholic schools could not function without the help of dedicated volunteers. One way in which volunteers help at our very own St. Victor School is through the Small Group Individual Work Helpers.

“We have been using these volunteers in the school for about the last 14 years,” says Principal Joe Peters. “The group’s main focus is to assist the teacher in ways that could benefit our students – this could include those students who may need extra practice, or those who need ‘enrichment.’ The volunteers work with both small groups, and one-on-one with individuals. It allows the extra help needed for our teachers to be successful.”

Volunteers in this group help out in a variety of ways. For example,

“These volunteers are able to work with children to reinforce or enrich skills being taught. They sometimes provide that ‘extra pair of hands’ teachers need when doing a project or activity. It also gives students the chance to see how important volunteering is in our lives, and we hope that idea of giving of one’s time will be a way of life for them in the future.”

– Principal Joe Peters



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they often work with students in the areas of reading, spelling or math. They also may listen to prayers, or assist in the Technology Lab with activities. Volunteers come to the school on a weekly basis – however, how often they volunteer throughout the week depends on the needs of the class they are assisting.

“For example, we have volunteers who come every time kindergarten

has Technology class, and other volunteers who come upon the need of the teacher and students,” Mr. Peters says.

While anyone is welcome to volunteer through the group, many of these volunteers are parents of current students. The Small Group Individual Work Helpers is a great way for parents to give back to the school – it also allows these parents to help not only their own children, but their children’s classmates as well.

The help provided by these volunteers is of great value to both the school’s staff and students. Teachers are able to do their jobs more efficiently, and students get the help they need from good role models.

“These volunteers are able to work with children to reinforce or enrich skills being taught,” Mr. Peters says.

Individual Work Helpers

Benefit School

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All parishioners are welcome to volunteer through the Small Group Individual Work Helpers – following all appropriate procedures for working with children, such as a VIRTUS training session, a release from the Diocese of Madison and a background check. For more information, or to get involved, please contact Principal Joe Peters at 608-325-3395 or joepeters@stvictor-monroe.org.



A volunteer works with a group of students

Baking Ministry *continued from front cover*

were very popular. Many times, those at the meetings are coming after work with no time to eat before they come. It’s a little something to tide them over.”

Lonna agrees that the treats provided by the Baking Ministry are a form of stewardship toward the parish.

“I know money is important in stewardship, but giving of your time is also part of stewardship, and we have so many gifted parish bakers who like to share,” she says. “All I do is make a phone call and they deliver!”

Lonna says that with the sign-ups that take place for desserts at the church fish fries and our Fall Festival,

she knew that such treats are most welcome. And now, with the RCIA sessions meeting each week until Easter, she is busy calling her ministry members for treats for those meetings, as well.

And, of course, additional Baking Ministry members are most welcome!

“I’ll take anyone who wants to help,” Lonna says.

For more information about the Baking Ministry at St. Clare, please contact Lonna Mayer at 608-325-2964.

“I know money is important in stewardship, but giving of your time is also part of stewardship, and we have so many gifted parish bakers who like to share. All I do is make a phone call and they deliver!” – Lonna Mayer, Baking Ministry Coordinator

Reflections on Our St. Clare of Assisi Parish Survey 2014

Earlier this year, Catholic Stewardship Consultants conducted a parish survey for us to better understand attitudes and perceptions about various areas of parish life. Our primary aims were to measure parishioners' understanding of Catholic stewardship so we can determine how to effectively develop stewardship at St. Clare of Assisi Parish. We also sought general feedback from parishioners about parish life and made recommendations based on those responses.

The survey was mailed to all 900-plus registered households in February 2014. The parish received 312 completed surveys to achieve a 35 percent response rate.

The results from the survey show that St. Clare of Assisi Parish is a vibrant faith community, with various areas in need of improvement. The Parish Staff, the Parish Pastoral Council, and the Parish Stewardship Council have been studying the data, your comments and suggestions, section by section. Your input is of great value, and I thank you for taking the time to complete this tool of information. Over the next few issues of this newsletter, I will share pertinent aspects of our conversations, respond to questions/suggestions that were made, and let you know appropriate action steps that are being taken to improve parish life.

LITURGY

The primary times that we gather as a community are at Liturgy – the Mass, the Sacraments, Vespers, Communal Penance Services, etc. Therefore, the first section for Staff and Council's conversations focused on Liturgy.

1.) It is significant that 81 percent of respondents to the survey reported attending Mass every weekend, with 19 percent not attending every week. While some people choose to not attend Mass each week, there are a number of people who cannot because of being homebound or lacking transportation. We have quite a number of parishioners who take Holy Communion to many people each Sunday, and on First Fridays of the month. **Action Step: To see how transportation can be made available to those who wish to participate at Mass, but lack the means to get to church.**

2.) The weekend Mass' music ministry received mostly positive marks, but there were negative comments about the volume of the organ and piano, hymn selection, and improvements needed with liturgical ministers. **Action**

Steps: We are engaging our musicians in conversations for improvement in regards to the volume of the instruments. With the richness of music in our Catholic Tradition, we are considering different styles of music, as well as involving different instrumentation when possible. The formation of a committee is in process.

3.) In regards to the times of our Masses, some expressed a return to three Masses on Sunday, restoring the 7 a.m. and others suggesting a Sunday evening Mass. While it is very difficult to create a schedule that meets everyone's preference, please know that I look forward to the day when we need to add another Mass because of the number of people attending! Of course, more Masses means more people serving in ministries, more musicians, etc. At this time, the 10 a.m. is the only one that gets rather crowded at times, while the 4:30 p.m. on Saturday and the 8 a.m. on Sunday have lots of room to welcome more people.

continued on next page

LITURGY *continued from page 6*

4.) Comments/concerns were made relative to our facilities that lack an accessibility for all people – spaces for gathering before and after Masses and at other times, parking, meeting rooms, restrooms, and the list goes on. During the last few years, we have worked to make the spaces we have more accessible and helpful to people, for example:

- a) The hand rail on the walkway around the south side of the church.
- b) A new sound system in church.
- c) The renovation of Nilles Hall, including the bathrooms that are a current project.
- d) The installation of an accessible restroom in the school building (2012). More to come!

5.) Additional comments/questions relative to the Liturgy section of the survey:

a) We continue to facilitate the training of all liturgical ministers who serve our community each weekend, and to encourage the dignity of their clothes for ministry.

Remember days gone by when people did dress up for Sunday Mass, as they would for other important gatherings?

b) Why two **lectors** at Mass? In order to schedule the number of people in this ministry on a more regular basis, two are assigned to each Mass. We also know that two people are prepared to proclaim God's Word in case one cannot be present when scheduled.

c) Why three **acolytes**, or servers? Gratefully, we have quite a number of youth who serve in this ministry, so to insure that they are scheduled frequently, we have three at each Mass. Three also enables the dignity of the processions by having candles accompanying the cross.

d) A **reverent quiet** in the church before and after Mass enhances people's preparation for the Eucharist, and affords personal prayer time as we gather in community. It's rather natural for people to greet one another when gathering, and one day we hope to have an adequate gathering space. Until then, we all can contribute to a more reverent quiet.

e) **Exodus at the end of Mass.** While the Mass begins with the Entrance Procession/Hymn and concludes at the end of the Recessional Procession/Hymn, there is a substantial "exodus" of people before Mass is ended. Sometimes it seems some have adopted the "fast food" mentality when once Holy Communion is received – it's time to leave. I wonder how many of us would think of leaving a movie or some other kind of important event before it was finished. In the midst of our busy schedules each week, how great it is when we can commit at least one hour to the Lord!

The Sunday Mass is the primary gathering of the Church, God's People. We continue to create an incredible environment, in all respects, to enable the full and active participation of all people in the praise and worship of our God. We are gathering a new Liturgy Committee to work on all the above areas of Liturgy in our parish. May we all continue to learn, to participate, and appreciate that in any large gathering of God's people, there are as many ideas/opinions as to how things should be. While being open to all, may we also understand what the Mass is about, and what the Catholic Church calls us to maintain in the rituals we celebrate.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Larry Bakke, Pastor



ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

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Holy Week & Easter Schedule

Tuesday, March 31

12 noon-1 p.m. – Confessions

Wednesday, April 1

2 p.m. – Living Stations

5-6 p.m. – Confessions

7 p.m. – Mime of the Lord's Passion

Friday, April 3

7 p.m. – Mime of the Lord's Passion

Holy Thursday

6:30 p.m. – Mass

7:30 p.m. – midnight – Eucharistic
Adoration

Good Friday

Noon – Our Lord's Passion

Easter Vigil

8 p.m.

Easter Sunday Masses

6:30 a.m., 8 a.m. 10 a.m. – St. Victor Church