

ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

May 2015

“The Privilege of Service” Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Fr. Larry Bakke’s Ordination

A shy young boy in middle school felt a clear calling. Long before a “yes” to this call led to his ordination, Fr. Larry attributes the seeds of his vocation to his Irish Catholic mother and the many priests in his young life.

“Leading up to my ordination, I felt a sense of awe, asking myself if I had what it takes to be a priest and experiencing a sense of trust in the conviction of my call,” says Fr. Larry Bakke. “It has been humbling to realize that my life is not my own, but it is to be faithful to God and what He has called me to do.”

This May, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Fr. Larry’s ordination, which took place on May 23, 1975 at St. Raphael’s Cathedral in Madison. His ordination was preceded by high school seminary, which was followed by college and then an additional four years of preparation. Yet, he first felt the call while attending Catholic middle school.



“My mother is 100 percent Irish Catholic and was very much involved at the parish, so I was close to the church from an early age,” Fr. Larry says. “I served Mass and was impressed by a number of young priests and their general goodness.”

Fr. Larry remembers celebrating his first Mass surrounded by friends and family and overcoming his shyness at the thought of

being in front of people.

“Many people don’t believe me when I say this, but I was petrified at the thought of being up in front of people!” Fr. Larry says. “When I first celebrated Mass, I was nervous but realized I was presiding for a whole community as an instrument of God proclaiming His word.”

Over the past 40 years, Fr. Larry has served in parishes as an associate pastor and pastor. He has also been the Youth Director for the diocese and a full-time chaplain at the university hospital.

“I have most enjoyed the privilege of service, of serving people,” Fr. Larry says. “I

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The True Meaning of the Word “Stewardship”

According to the late stewardship pioneer Msgr. Thomas McGread, when a pastor speaks about money during his homily, 75 percent of the congregation immediately stops listening.

Let’s face it — most of us do not like to discuss money, and many of us feel that talking about money at the pulpit is bad form.

However, did you know that tithing is mentioned in the Old Testament 39 times, and in the New Testament 11 times? Tithing is biblically based, and it simply means to give a portion of our gifts back to God.

A further distinction is that tithing does not equal stewardship. Or, more fundamentally, giving money does not equal stewardship. Stewardship, which is also a biblical principle, really has nothing to do with money. As a matter of fact, 19 of the main parables of Christ relate directly to stewardship. And, in those parables when Christ speaks of stewardship, He never mentions raising money. Surprised?

Stewardship simply means being grateful for all of God’s blessings. Everything we have — each breath we take on earth, the tremendous talents we possess,

and our ability to earn income to sustain ourselves — all stem from God. We come into the world with nothing and we leave with nothing.

Recognizing this and being grateful for our bountiful blessings is the first step of stewardship. Once these realizations fall into place, we are then eager to find a way to respond to God’s generosity and to embark upon a stewardship way of life.

And stewardship is just that, a way of life. It is not like a TV show to which you can tune in whenever the mood strikes, and shut off when you are no longer interested. It is truly a way of living.

Yet, the mere word “stewardship” has gotten a bad rap over the years — and not just by us lay people.

In 1992, when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops were forming the Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, they originally didn’t want to title it *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*.

“Instead, they wanted to just call it *A Disciple’s Response*, with the reason being that they felt stewardship meant money,” said Msgr. McGread before his passing in April 2013. “I convinced them at the time that ‘stewardship’ is a

biblical term and it is our job to explain what a steward is. Before the Pastoral Letter, most of us didn’t understand the spiritual dimension of stewardship.”

So, how do we go about sharing the spiritual dimensions of stewardship with fellow parishioners and lay leaders?

First of all, Msgr. McGread cited the importance of being hospitable and discovering the needs of parishioners. He felt that when parishioners were welcomed and their needs were met, they were fulfilled and felt a sense of belonging to their parish. This, in turn, creates ownership. Once parishioners felt like they were part of the parish, they wanted to respond by volunteering, and sharing their time, talent and treasure in order to help make it the best parish community possible.

And, when parishioners support their parish with all of their resources out of gratitude, the entire parish blossoms. Prayers increase, ministries grow, and yes, the offertory increases. These blessings are natural outcomes of living a stewardship way of life, and they are why it is important that we should always remember the true meaning of the word “stewardship.”

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A Letter From Our Pastor

The Love for *God* and *One Another*

Dear Parishioners,

If we listen closely to the Mass readings throughout this month of May, we will recognize a common theme – love. Of course, every month and every day – and every minute, for that matter – is a time to show our love for one another. St. John begins many of the passages of his letters with the word “Beloved.”

We will hear in one of the readings, “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God.” If we would simply follow that one commandment to “Love one another,” we will carry out the stewardship of all of our gifts. Living as a steward is indeed living a life of love – for God, for the Church, for everyone in need, for our families, and for everyone with whom we come in contact.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis has spoken about this often during his papacy. At his very first Mass as pope, he said in his homily, “Everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God’s gifts.” There are two important parts to this statement: first, we need to recognize that all is a gift from God, everything we have and everything we are; second, we have a responsibility to use those gifts wisely in service to others.

Pope Francis has also emphasized this stewardship of service throughout his papacy. Speaking to young people in Brazil, he said, “Let us protect with love all that God has given us.” Not only does he point out how we are gifted, but he recognizes that our motivation for using and sharing those gifts should be love. Recently, at an audience with young people, he was even more specific: “Have you thought of how you can put your talents at the service of others?” he asked. “Do not bury your talents! Set your stakes on great ideals, the ideals that enlarge the heart, the ideals of service that make your talents fruitful.”

We all have been called to love – called by our Lord and Savior, by our saints, by our Pope, and by our spiritual leaders. Nevertheless, we also understand that loving in this way and being good stewards is never easy. Let us vow to work together to love and to carry out our lives in ways so many have challenged us to do.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Larry M. Bakke
Pastor



St. Victor



It has been said that the ability to create is a gift from God. From writing a heartfelt poem to dancing like no one's watching, creating something new gives us a connection to God that at times feels nothing short of miraculous.

On the evening of May 1, St. Victor Pre-K through fifth-grade students had the opportunity to present their creative works during the St. Victor Art Fair. It was a night of excitement and pride as the students shared their sculptures, drawings, and paintings with their families, friends and parishioners.

In her first year as art teacher at St. Victor's, Nikki Cooper could not be more impressed with the work that her students have put into their art this year, and she has been overjoyed to be a part of this community.

"I have been doing art in one capacity or another since I was 16 years old and have taught art in a variety of settings, but there is such an amazing family atmosphere here at St. Victor's and it has been such a delight to work with these well-formed children," Mrs. Cooper says.

The annual Art Fair is a chance for the students to showcase what they have been learning throughout the year and to take pride in the work of their hands. Mrs. Cooper points out that the best part of the evening for the students is running through the gym and the halls to try to find their artwork, and then actually being able to take it home!

"The energy and enthusiasm in the air is so tangible, and being able to see how proud the kids are



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Art Fair!

when they show off their artwork brings me so much joy,” she says.

“What I love about the 4K students, is that no one has really told them what is good art and bad art, so to them, everything they create is good, which is what I try to teach the older children as well – every piece of art they create is good.”

A project that has become a tradition in the art department at St. Victor School is to create a paper mache manger scene that they will take with them by the end of their time at the school. Starting in kindergarten they will make sheep. Then, in first grade they will add angels. In second grade, the shepherds are made, and camels come along in third grade. Then, in fourth grade, the donkeys are created. Finally, in fifth grade, the Holy Family is made. So, by the end of their time at St. Victor, the students will have completed a manger scene they can take with them.

“For me, teaching art is about sharing my own passion for it and seeing my students succeed – when they actually put into practice what I am teaching them, and continue to improve,” Mrs. Cooper says.

The art department at St. Victor celebrated another successful Art Fair and is already looking forward to what next year’s Art Fair will hold. The artistic talents among the students will continue to be fostered and shared, with the knowledge that God is the giver of the talents they have, and that by creating works of art, they are giving back to Him.

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St. Clare of Assisi Parish Presents

TOTUS TUUS

“TOTALLY YOURS”

A Summer Catholic Youth Program

Coming to Monroe is a unique summer faith and fun experience, where our youth will encounter a deeper connection with their faith and our church community. This five-day event will offer sacraments and inspire the youth of our parish to live the joy of the Gospel. All framed by goofy skits and a giant water balloon battle, this formation will be an entertaining and unforgettable week of fun in the sun!

1ST — 6TH GRADE

Monday, June 22 - Friday, June 26, 2015
9:00 am - 2:30 pm

7TH — 12TH GRADE

Sunday, June 21 - Thursday, June 25, 2015
7:00 - 9:15 pm

St. Clare Parish Campus, 1760 14th St., Monroe, WI

\$20/student enrolled or \$50/family of three or more enrolled.

Early registration is encouraged. Limited openings available. Register by going to stclaregreencounty.org and click on Totus Tuus.



**FOR MORE
INFORMATION OR
TO VOLUNTEER**

Call the parish office
at 608-325-9506 or
[faithformation@
stclaregreencounty.org](mailto:faithformation@stclaregreencounty.org).



Doing Little Things With Great Love

The Bulletin Stuffer Ministry

Giving back to our Lord in thanksgiving for all He has given to us does not necessarily need to be complicated. It's something we all can do, no matter what our season of life. And even the simpler tasks done with love can prove very satisfying. The Bulletin Stuffer Ministry here at St. Clare of Assisi is a wonderful example of a group of parishioners who devote a little time to a simple task and reap great rewards.

Parishioner Theresa Dye coordinates this ministry. Since her retirement in 2004, Theresa has made volunteer service a special priority in her life.

"I have always felt that if you have been fortunate enough to have had a good job, a good life, you have a responsibility to give back," Theresa says. "There are so many oppor-

tunities to serve. And it makes you feel good to give to others."

Theresa maintains a list of parishioners who have volunteered to gather and fill the bulletins with additional handouts when needed. It may seem to be just a simple and ordinary task, but it is one that is essential for keeping parishioners up to date on all that is going on at St. Clare of Assisi. It usually requires about six volunteers a couple of hours to get the job done. When their help is needed, they meet – typically on Fridays – in the Parish Center.

"Usually, the people I call are more than willing to do it," Theresa says. "People are so nice about giving of their time."

Theresa is also quick to point out the benefits for those who step up to help.

"Lots of us have lived in Monroe our whole lives," she says.

"When we get together, we like to reminisce, we discuss different religious topics, we even complain to each other! We call ourselves the 'Holy Stuffers.' There is definitely a camaraderie that develops so each time it's just really fun."

The most recent group of volunteers included many people whom Theresa had never met before.

"It was wonderful to get to know a whole new group of parishioners," she says. "Now when we see each other in church, we recognize each other and speak together."

"Everybody has some kind of talent," Theresa continues. "This ministry is very simple to do even if you are limited in your physical abilities."

If you would like to participate in this simple but rewarding ministry, feel free to contact Theresa Dye at 608-325-2603.



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– Theresa Dye*



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“The Privilege of Service” *continued from front cover*

have had the adventure of many kinds of ministry within the priesthood and a wealth of broadening experiences.”

As the pastor of St. Clare since July of 2011, Fr. Larry has appreciated the welcome he received when he first arrived as a stranger to the community and to the area.

“Now I feel very much at home, and my goal is to learn all the parishioners by name!” Fr. Larry says. “It is a privilege to do church together, and everything I am about as a priest is the church, is helping people be closer to Jesus Christ with the faith as part of our daily lives.”

Today, Fr. Larry finds joy in seeing a greater involvement in the parish and growth in spiritual lives through stewardship. He constantly considers how more and more people can discover the goodness of being actively involved in the faith.

“I want people to know that I love them and love being here with them,” Fr. Larry says. “People are striving every day to the Lord’s call of holiness, and it is exciting to be a part of that. Life is filled with possibilities. Open the door!”

Join us in honoring Fr. Larry on the 40th anniversary of his ordination by sending your warm wishes to him (Rev. Larry Bakke, 1760 14th St., Monroe, WI 53566). We are honoring his wishes by not having a celebratory event, but we also know he would love to hear from you.

