

# ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

September 2014

SERVING MEMBERS OF OUR PARISH FAMILY

— IN A TIME OF NEED —

## *The Funeral Lunch Ministry*



- 3 Let Us Renew Our Efforts to Give Out of Love as Good Stewards
- 4 We Are All Qualified to Be Worthy Stewards
- 5 Local Thrift Store Provides Important Income to Help Fund Social Mission of the Church
- 6 Celebrating the Feast of the Archangels
- 7 “Giving Thanks for the Creation God has Made”  
*The Blessing of the Pets*

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

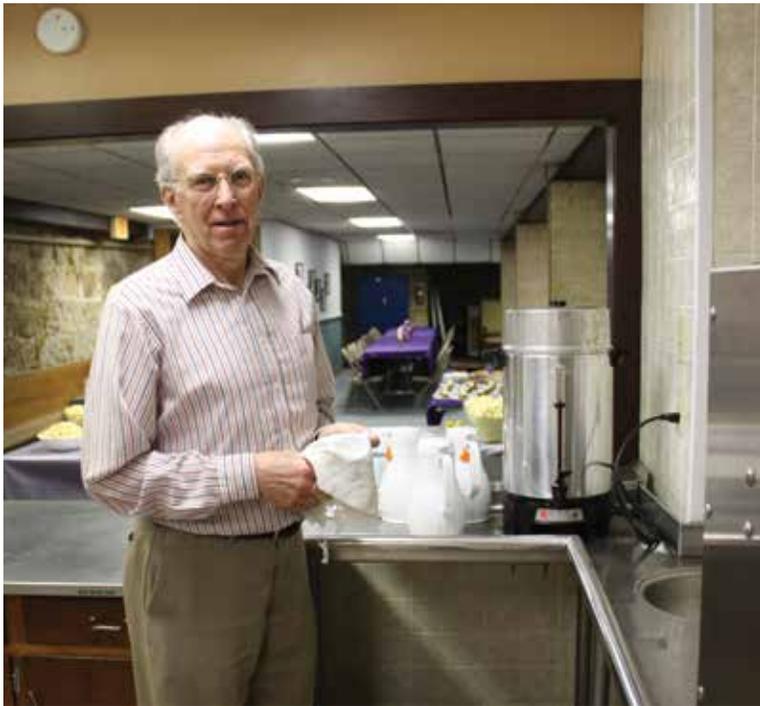
The Funeral Lunch Ministry here at St. Clare of Assisi is made up of a group of volunteers who work behind the scenes to put on luncheons for families who have lost a loved one. The goal of the ministry is to provide grieving families with a place for family members and friends to gather, enjoy a meal, and not have to worry about a thing.

Rita Farris, the ministry’s overall coordinator, manages a list of 130 volunteers who come together, often without much notice, to build the meal. Each volunteer can choose when and how he or she would like to serve. Some are able to make a salad or a dessert, while others are willing to help set up, serve at, and clean up for the luncheon. Whenever there is a need, the list is gone through to see who may be available. Each month has a coordinator who makes the phone calls until all of the family’s needs are met.

“The nice thing about volunteering for this ministry is that people feel they have carried out their stewardship responsibility in a way that is meaningful to the families involved,” Rita says. “It’s the type of stewardship work where you aren’t called on every month, and if you aren’t available when you’re called, you can just say you aren’t available and you will be called another time. It never involves a great deal of time – you can make a salad or dessert on your own time and deliver it the morning of or the day before the funeral.”

*continued on page 2*

## Funeral Lunch Ministry *continued from front cover*



Most of the work that the ministry does is unseen by the rest of the parish, until such a time when a family loses a loved one. Volunteers make all of the sides in their own homes, while the main dishes – usually sandwiches and potato salad or baked chicken are ordered in advance from a local grocery store. Because most of the food is donated, the ministry is able to provide a delicious meal at very low cost to the family.

“I think it’s one of the very special, almost behind-the-scenes missions that we are performing here at St. Clare,” Rita says. “All those phone calls that are made, nobody even knows that they happen. All of a sudden, the food just shows up! Those who are not a part of it don’t realize that this is even taking place until they have to take advantage of it.”

Rita is always struck by how grateful the families are for the meal. The families often have friends and relatives coming into town, so they are thankful to have a place to gather without the burden of hosting and feeding all of the visitors themselves. Volunteers are also grateful to be able to help grieving families in some way.

“We receive beautiful notes, and family members stop at the kitchen after and even during the luncheon to extend words of appreciation,” Rita says. “One of the biggest reasons we do this is to help the families at a time where you want to do something for them, but there aren’t many things you can do. It’s very fulfilling for those who are working in this ministry. It fills their stewardship requirement and they feel rewarded since they see the appreciation from those being served.”

For more information on the Funeral Lunch Ministry, or to volunteer, please contact Rita Farris at 608-325-2224 or via email at [trewfarris\\_1999@yahoo.com](mailto:trewfarris_1999@yahoo.com).

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## Let Us Renew Our Efforts to Give Out of Love as Good Stewards

Dear Parishioners,

If your calendar looks like mine, then we all know that everything is shifting back into “high gear,” as they say. Schools are back in session; most people are home from vacation; clubs, organizations and ministries are back at work full-time; and life is suddenly more hectic. As I looked at the calendar for September, certain things became obvious to me. These were accentuated by a comment someone made to me recently about how Pope Francis made them proud to be a Catholic.

I think I grasped the significance of that, and it has a September theme. We begin the month with Labor Day on the 1st. Last year Pope Francis said, “Work is fundamental to the dignity of a person... It gives one the ability to maintain oneself, one’s family, to contribute to the growth of one’s own nation.” That is certainly true as we honor our workers on Labor Day and reflect on the dignity of “labor.” Every human being enjoys a basic right to be respected – not because of any title, position, prestige, or accomplishment, but first of all because we are created in the image and likeness of God. God bless all those who labor. What we do to maintain the fabric of our culture through our work is not just a blessing, but an important part of our stewardship in relation to our lives and our society.

The second aspect of the September calendar that seemed significant to me was that Friday, Sept. 5, is the Feast Day of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Small in stature, but so very Catholic in everything she represented and did, Blessed Teresa was an important part of my own perception of what it meant to be Catholic and Christian. It is difficult to believe that she has been gone for 17 years. She was the absolute epitome of what it meant to be Catholic, to love and to serve. She represented a living example of stewardship in our lifetimes. What she had to say about our lives and how we should live them became some of the more quotable illustrations of living stewardship that we reflect upon today. For example, she said, “It is not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving.” That is our challenge as we begin the busy part of our year, to do everything we do with love.



Finally, on Sunday, Sept. 14 we celebrate The Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The Cross has enormous meaning to us as Catholics. How many times do we make the Sign of the Cross to signify the Holy Trinity and to remember that the Cross represents so much to us? It is a renewal of our Baptism every time we make the Sign of the Cross.

Some 1,700 years ago, St. Helen discovered the true cross in Jerusalem. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was built on that spot, and it was dedicated on Sept. 14, 335, thus our veneration of the Cross on that date.

When we make the Sign of the Cross, we are also indicating our discipleship, our pledge to be good stewards. Whether it is in our labors that we glorify God, in serving the Lord and others with love, or constantly reminding ourselves of Christ’s salvation of us on the Cross, we need to constantly rededicate ourselves to service and stewardship. This month – when we revive so much in our parish – is a good time to do that. Blessed Mother Teresa also said, “The needs are great, and none of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Larry M. Bakke  
Pastor

## We Are All Qualified to Be Worthy Stewards

When it comes to the demands of the Christian life – specifically the demands of parish life – how often do we ask ourselves if we are qualified to take on that role?

When presented with a chance to sign up for a certain ministry at our parish, we may believe that we lack certain skills and feel unworthy to step forward. Or we may simply be unwilling to take the first step toward becoming involved in parish life.

This reaction is the natural product of our fallen human nature. However, we cannot look at the Christian call from this perspective.

When God became man, He made His grace available to us so we could be like Him. Jesus commands us in Matthew, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). That is certainly a lot to ask. And while it is impossible for us to accomplish this solely by our own strength, God enables us to accomplish the impossible – but only when we make the decision to accept His grace and live up to the high calling He has bestowed upon us.

The antidote to the “unworthiness” disease that threatens the best of us can be summed up in one word – “magnanimity,” a virtue with which most of us may be unfamiliar. The word itself is virtually extinct in the English language. It comes from



the Latin words *magnus* and *anima*, which taken together mean “greatness of soul.”

A magnanimous person is someone who sees the demands of the Christian life as a sea of endless possibilities with God’s grace, and who determines to rise to the greatness to which God calls him. This person neither stops to count the cost, nor to measure his unworthiness. Magnanimity is not arrogance, because a magnanimous person recognizes that only by God’s grace does he accomplish anything. Nor is it imprudence, since he strives only to do what God asks of him and nothing more.

Where can we find such people? Do they even exist in today’s world? The lives of the saints stand as some of the best and most inspirational examples of magnanimous souls. Indeed, many of the most attractive saints were very ordinary people who

became extraordinary simply because of their magnanimity.

St. Thérèse spent her short existence in total obscurity behind convent walls doing little acts with great love. Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, who never traveled the world preaching, touched the hearts of his friends and tirelessly served the poor in his own town. St. Gianna Beretta Molla just tried to be a good wife, mother and doctor. St. Peter led the entire Church, even though he only knew how to fish. St. Joseph, a simple carpenter, raised and cared for God Himself made man. Our Lady, nothing more than a young peasant girl, said, “Let it be done unto me,” allowing God to become man. When examining history from the beginning of time, there is a detectable pattern – God almost always calls the most ordinary and seemingly unqualified people to accomplish His great works.

God is calling all of us to be magnanimous with our lives. Even in the small circle of our daily dealings – whether at home, work or in our parish – there are countless ways we can show that we are not afraid of what He might ask of us. The journey might not always be easy. But with God’s grace, we can point our sails toward heaven with confidence, and never look back.

*“The faith given to me in baptism suggests to me surely: by yourself you will do nothing, but if you have God as the center of all your action, then you will reach the goal.”*

*– Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati*

## Local Thrift Store Provides Important Income to Help Fund Social Mission of the Church

Most of us are at least a little bit uncomfortable with the famous Gospel passage in which Christ describes the Last Judgment:

“Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me’” (Matthew 25:34-36).

Throughout its history, the Church has taken this apocalyptic prophesy as a call to lead lives of radical service – for, in serving the poor, we are serving Christ Himself.

One of the best-known Catholic service organizations around the world is the St. Vincent de Paul Society. In fact, it is so well-known that we may sometimes lose sight of the important work that the society does year-in and year-out right in our own community.

For example, did you know that the St. Victor Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul annually provides around \$50,000 of support to those in need right here in our community? That assistance comes largely in the form of one-time financial gifts for assistance with rent, car repairs, utilities, and medical expenses.

The 15 members of the conference meet twice a month to assess needs and decide how to allocate the available funds.

“We budget so that we can give out around \$5,000 a month,” says Donna Phillips, president of the St. Victor Conference. “We will have anywhere from

three to 11 requests per meeting. But even if we can’t help them, we provide a list of local food pantries and assist with referrals to the county programs and other groups that could be a help to them.”

Managing such large sums of money, the members of the Society are careful to allocate the funds in a responsible way.

“We screen the clients quite thoroughly,” Donna says. “They have to bring in their receipts and bills and other credentials to show that it’s an authentic need. Plus, we never give money directly. Rather, we pay it to the landlord or to the utility company, etc.”

To raise the tens of thousands of dollars that are given away each year, the ministry relies almost exclusively on its thrift store.

Typically, a St. Vincent de Paul thrift store grows out of an already-established ministry at one or more local parishes. However, that’s not always the case.

“In 1994 a group of people in town decided that they wanted to open some kind of a thrift store – they looked at Goodwill but decided that St. Vincent de Paul was the best fit,” Donna says. “It was kind of a backward way of beginning because they didn’t realize that in order to have a store, they needed to have a St. Vincent de Paul conference. So, the store opened a few months before the conference was actually formed.”

Nevertheless, 20 years later, after having touched the lives of thousands of people in Monroe, it’s safe to say the unusual

founding had little impact on the conference’s positive impact in the community!

Over the years, the conference has expanded its impact beyond financial assistance in several ways – helping host Loaves and Fishes community dinners at Grace Lutheran Church once a month, helping host a mobile food pantry, providing vouchers for school supplies, and providing scholarships for junior college and vocational school.

If you would like to become a member of the parish’s St. Vincent de Paul Conference, please contact Donna Phillips directly at 608-325-3738. However, to contribute to the work of the ministry, you do not need to become a ministry member. The easiest way to help is to simply shop at the store – all of its profits go directly to helping the poor in our community. In addition, you can also make financial contributions, donate used items to the store, or volunteer to help organize and price donated items.

The St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store is located at 501 1st Ave. Donations are accepted during regular store hours. To volunteer, please call the store at 608-329-7837 and speak with Sue Schwartz or Calli Harrison. Financial contributions can be mailed to PO Box 178, Monroe, WI 53566.





ST. RAPHAEL



ST. GABRIEL



ST. MICHAEL

## Celebrating the Feast of the Archangels

Every Sept. 29, the Church celebrates the feast day of the Archangels – St. Michael, St. Gabriel and St. Raphael. We are indeed blessed to be inspired by these “servants and messengers of God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 329).

The term “archangels” has its Scriptural basis in the New Testament (1 Thes 4:16, Jude 1:9), indicating a chief or leading angel. “Archangel” generally refers to St. Michael, St. Gabriel and St. Raphael, as they are the three angels most frequently mentioned throughout Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The fact that these three angels are mentioned by name on multiple occasions indicates the significance of their roles in the history of salvation. It is because of these important roles that we take pause to celebrate on Sept. 29.

St. Michael is mentioned by name on several occasions in Sacred Scripture (Dn 10:13, Rev 12:7), and his role in the Tradition of the Church has been extensively documented. He has been widely referred to as the “great prince,” and is most often associated with the apocalypse – the final battle against Satan. Christian Tradition gives St. Michael four different roles, but he has primarily been regarded as the patron and protector of the Church.

St. Gabriel is mentioned by name in Scripture (Lk 1:19), and Tradition has also assigned him implicit roles within Scripture where he is not specifically mentioned. Most important, however, is St. Gabriel’s role as the messenger of God, delivering to Mary the announcement of the birth of Our Savior (Lk 1:26).

St. Raphael is mentioned by name only in the Book of Tobit, where he is responsible for healing Tobias. Raphael means “God has healed” and thus, he has also often been associated with the “angel of the Lord” (Jn 5).

The feast day on Sept. 29 gives each of us the opportunity to consider our own role in the Church, as we gratefully commemorate the Archangels responsible for carrying out their roles of defender, messenger and healer.

## *“Giving Thanks for the Creation God has Made”* **THE BLESSING OF THE PETS**

The annual Blessing of the Pets at St. Clare of Assisi gathers us together with our animal companions to thank the Lord for His creation. Whether your household is blessed with a dog, cat, turtle, or horse, all are welcome.

“I think it’s important that we ask for God’s blessing on man’s best friend,” says Randy Symanitz, director of Liturgical and Pastoral Ministry. “We are giving thanks for the creation that God has made and the enjoyment that a pet brings everyone.”



The tradition of blessing our pets stems from St. Francis of Assisi and his love for God’s creation and creatures. Since it was St. Francis’ teachings that would inspire St. Clare – and the two would ultimate-

ly found the Order of St. Clare – our parish has a unique connection to both saints from Assisi.

“The Blessing of the Pets is a great tradition to foster,” Randy says.



“We found that for our parish, being renamed after our merger, it is even more appropriate for us to take this on in light of the connection between St. Francis and St. Clare.”

When he joined the parish two years ago, Randy brought the tradition with him in its present form, with one distinct change.

“At my former parish, we used to have all the animals inside,” Randy says. “We decided to keep them outside for practical reasons, and we pray for good weather!”

Each year, the Blessing of the Pets occurs on the Sunday closest to St. Francis’ feast day, which is on Oct. 4. This year the service will take place on Sunday, Oct. 5 at 1 p.m.

“It is an ecumenical service, so the whole community is welcome to join us,” Randy says. “We usually do some advertising with local churches inviting everyone to attend. As for the pets, all of them are also welcome. We usually have the typical domestic animals such as cats, dogs, rabbits, and guinea pigs. It varies



from year to year. The largest we’ve had is a horse.”

The service includes singing hymns, including prayers attributed to St. Francis such as “All Creatures of Our God and King” and “Make



*continued on back cover*



# ST. CLARE of ASSISI PARISH

1760 14th Street  
Monroe, WI 53566

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Monroe, Wis. 53566  
Permit No. 177

Return Service Requested



## The Blessing of Pets *continued from page 7*

Me a Channel of Your Peace.” Then, the Liturgy of the Word is read with passages from Genesis and Isaiah emphasizing our stewardship of the animals. After the Liturgy of the Word, all the animals and their owners are blessed with holy water. The service concludes with a prayer to grant protection to all of Christ’s creatures.

The whole community comes together for the Blessing of the Pets. One parishioner who owns a printing shop donates Blessing of the Pets T-shirts with different designs each year – the proceeds from the T-shirts benefit the Green County Humane Society. St. Victor School also becomes involved and does a pet food collection for



the Pet Food Pantry to help those in the community take care of their pets. Last year, the Catholic Daughters of America and the St. Victor Home and School Board provided refreshments.

“The whole service lasts about 20 minutes, and then people usually tend to gather around for a couple hours,” Randy says. “We have pet treats and human treats. The kids enjoy it, and it’s a great tradition.”

For more information about the Blessing of the Pets, please contact Randy Symanitz at 608-325-9506 or [randys@stclaregreencounty.org](mailto:randys@stclaregreencounty.org).

