

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Changing Missalettes Brings Parishioners Together in Service and Fellowship

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When we open up our missalettes during Mass, we probably don't think about how they end up distributed throughout the pews. Three times a year, a group of parishioners volunteer their time to ensure that the proper missalettes and music issues are ready for each Mass. This behind-the-scenes service is not only a huge help to the parish – it's also a way for parishioners to come together as a community.



As Kathy Lewis says, this ministry is "a worthwhile thing to do."

"The work could be done by our custodian and me, but it is much more fun and less time-consuming to make it a community event!" says Music and Liturgy Coordinator Kathy Lewis. "Even though we are together less than an hour, there is a real spirit of camaraderie that develops. It is a worthwhile thing to do."

Missalettes and music issues are changed right before Advent starts, and missalettes only are changed right before Holy Week, and then again once more in the summer. Ministry

volunteers are divided into three different groups, alphabetically by last name, and each group is notified once a year to take a turn. Anyone who is available on the designated day just needs to show up and help out.

"We usually end up with a crew of 15-20 people each time," Kathy says. "We wheel the racks into the gathering space earlier in the day and set out the new books, emptying their boxes in order to repack the old books for recycling. When the people come, we divide up the jobs – some take the folders off the storage racks, some remove and pack up old books, and some insert new books and replace the folders on the racks. When everything is finished, the racks are wheeled back to their places by the doors. We are usually done in about 30-40 minutes. Also, there is usually someone willing to load up the old books and take them to a city recycling bin – again, a big help to our custodian."

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APRIL 2017

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Striving to Tithe: *How You Can Give*

As Catholics, we know we have an obligation to support the Church, but we recognize that each family has to decide how much they can give. Some families truly can't afford to tithe – giving 10 percent of income. All the same, we do honor the tithe as a Scriptural benchmark that has been followed for centuries. It began with the Israelites giving 10 percent of their “first fruits” (see Deut. 26:4-10), and has persisted through today in the Catholic Church. It's a good standard to strive toward.

But for many, tithing may seem difficult. In fact, for most of us, tithing is difficult – but only at first. Families who tithe invariably say they had to “take a leap of faith” when they started, but they also say they feel great joy and peace knowing that they are putting God first in their finances. And after a while, most say they don't even miss the money. But how did they get to that point? Below are a few steps you can take to begin tithing.



1. Believe you should tithe.

The very first step toward tithing is believing that it is a worthy goal that you should strive toward. It has to be an intentional decision to put God first, before anything else. This is contrary to the old investment adage, “pay yourself first” – meaning to first put aside a certain percentage into savings before paying bills. Someone who tithes has modified this mentality, with 10 percent going to God first, and then the other 90 percent going towards savings, expenses, etc.

2. Make a budget and stick to it.

Budgeting is simple on paper, but harder in real life. To begin, simply calculate your income and make an honest evaluation of your expenses. Put your tithe as the first “line item,” and treat it like you would your rent or mortgage payment – something you would never miss. Choose to give to God what's right, not what's left.

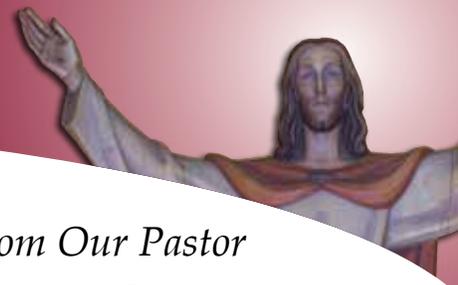
3. Cut back and re-prioritize.

Evaluate how you spend your money and find ways to cut back. It costs nearly \$30 for two people to go to a movie and buy popcorn, sodas and candy. The new car you're thinking about may cost \$60 more per month to add a sunroof and leather interior. Are these things you could live without? In our consumer-oriented society, there's no end to what we want to buy. The question is where our priorities lie – do you want a plasma TV more than a vibrant youth ministry?

4. Choose good charities.

A charity may be a friend or family member in need. It may be Catholic Charities or the Salvation Army. To find where your money can make a difference, try visiting CharityNavigator.org.

Contrary to what some televangelists say, if you give God \$100, he's not going to automatically give you a winning lottery ticket. Mathematically, you will have less money after you tithe. But we do know that God rewards those who do what is right – perhaps not in tangible ways, but certainly in spiritual ways. Choosing to tithe will take a leap of faith on your part, but it's one that will surely pay dividends. “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven to pour down blessing upon you without measure?” (Malachi 3:10).



A Letter from Our Pastor

Give Thanks to the Lord, *It Is Right and Just*

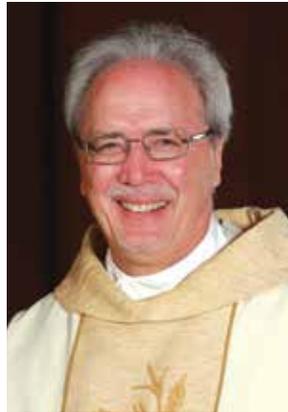
Dear Parishioners,

Every time I prepare my monthly letter to you in this newsletter, I am reminded how blessed I am. Being a priest truly is a blessing. While the job is not always easy — a pastor has many responsibilities — the rewards are equally humbling.

As we complete our preparations and then share in our celebrations of the Triduum and Easter, I am also prompted to think about the holiest things I do. By far, the holiest is celebrating Mass, and especially consecrating the holy bread and wine so Christ is present among us. The very word “consecration” literally means “association with the sacred.” To have that duty is incredible. I have never taken it for granted, and although it may appear at times to be somewhat automatic, it never is for me.

Almost all of us are familiar with the Mass, and with what we do and say leading up to the high point — the Eucharist. But I think we must guard against becoming too casual in our responses and what we say. That is what I work to avoid, but I believe you need to work just as diligently to make sure that you are listening, hearing, and being aware of what you are saying. For us as Catholics, the Mass is the most important sacred act in the Church.

I suppose I could write a whole series of letters or articles on the meaning of everything we say and do at



Mass, but I was thinking of one exchange in particular during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is something we may say in sort of a habitual way, but I firmly believe each of us must truly consider what we are saying.

I say to you, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” and you respond, “It is right and just.” Think about what that means, because it is very much at the heart of stewardship. I am saying we need to thank God, show gratitude for everything we are and everything with which we are gifted —

and you, at least in words, acknowledge that doing that is exactly what we need to do. The Mass is filled with statements and exchanges of that sort, and I would ask that we really think about what they truly mean.

Even the simple exchange between the Eucharistic Minister and you at the actual reception of the Host is heavy with meaning. We say, “The Body of Christ,” and you reply “Amen.” In that instance, “Amen” means “Yes, I do believe this is Jesus.” Like myself, you are blessed. Sometimes we just need to realize it. Happy Easter!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten
Pastor

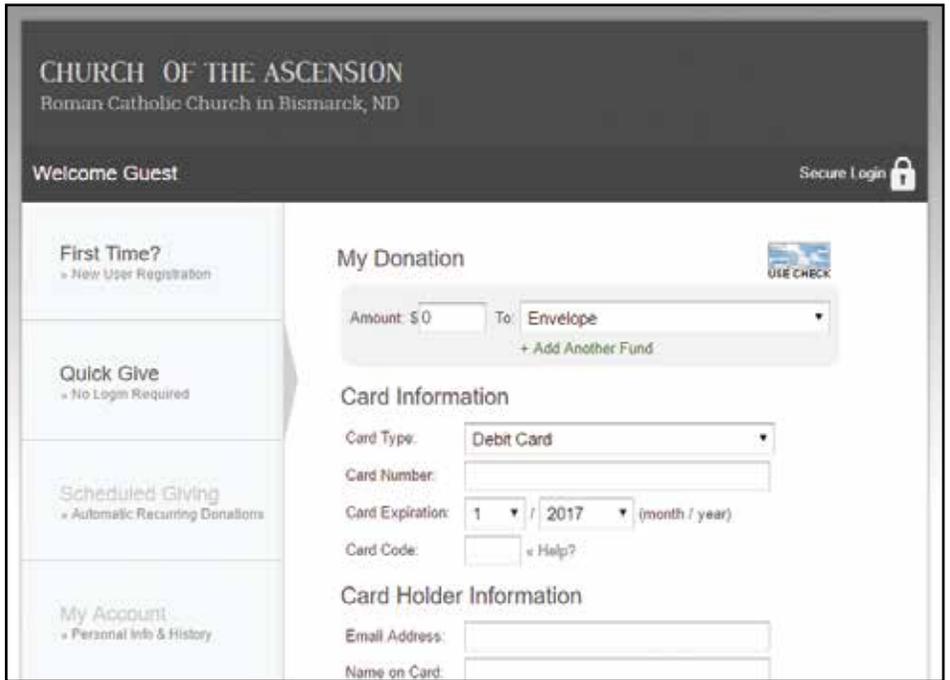




FAMILY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY



Calendar of parish events.



An exciting new feature of the website gives parishioners the opportunity to donate to the parish online for either a one-time or recurring gift.

hopes this new website will continue to strengthen and unify us as a parish family; to become a tool for communication and further fostering that stewardship spirit. For example, the renovated site contains a digital donation program, allowing parishioners to use credit cards for a

one-time or recurring title. The site also contains contact information for all staff members, digital versions of weekly bulletins and parish newsletters, and detailed information about all parish ministries.

“The goal is to make us as a parish family increasingly more connected,”

James says. “And that is what we are hoping will result from this new website. We want to be sure that we are meeting everyone’s needs and that we have successfully created a user-friendly product. Our hope is to continuously improve transparency and access to parish life.”

Changing Missalettes

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Through this service, volunteers are able to help in a big way by giving just a small amount of their time. Even serving in small ways makes a tremendous impact on both the parish and on the volunteers themselves.

“I think that the sacrifice involved in coming on a designated evening at a designated time is part of what stewardship is about,” Kathy says. “I have learned to trust through this activity – I always pray that I’ll have enough people to get the work done and that it will go smoothly. Weather is not always cooperative, and there have been times I worried about having people to do it, but someone always comes through. God sees that His work gets done!”

This opportunity for service also allows parishioners to get to know each other, and to continue to build community here at Ascension.

“I’ve seen new parishioners come to help, and before the evening is over, they are chatting away with everyone like old friends,” Kathy says. “People are so cheerful and quick to take others in, and it makes for a heart-warming experience.”

For more information, or to get involved in changing our missalettes, please contact Kathy Lewis through the parish office at 701-223-3606.



2017 Holy Week Schedule

Reconciliation Services:

Sunday, April 9th: St. Anne's, 3 p.m.
Monday, April 10th: St. Mary's, 7 p.m.
Tuesday, April 11th: Ascension, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, April 12th: Cathedral, 7 p.m.

Chrism Mass:

Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Monday, April 10th: 11 a.m.

Holy Thursday, April 13th

Mass of the Lord's Supper: 7 p.m.
Eucharistic Exposition (in the Community Room)
8:15-9:00 p.m. – Families whose last names begin with A-M
9-10 p.m. – Families whose last names begin with N-Z

Good Friday, April 14th:

Commemoration of the Lord's Passion is at Noon
Stations of the Cross: 5:30 p.m.

Holy Saturday, April 15th:

(There will be no confessions at 3:30 p.m. and no 5 p.m. mass)

Easter Vigil: 9 p.m.

Breakfast to follow in the Community Room. Please bring an Easter bread to share.

Easter Sunday, April 16th:

Masses at 8, 9:30, and 11 a.m.



Forming Our Parish Family IN THE FAITH



As Catholics, we believe in Jesus Christ – the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Fullness of Truth – and all that He has revealed to us. This Sacred Deposit of Faith, rich in Scripture and Tradition, is a wealth of profound, exciting, and personal realities, and we are invited to continually grow in our understanding and our love of it all.

“Our faith is truly vibrant,” says Beth Kathol, our parish Director of Religious Education. “The more we learn about the teachings of the faith, the better we can live it out.”

As Director of Religious Education, Beth is passionate about handing on the faith. She finds it to be enriching for her to help others gain a greater understanding, which, in turn, tends to deepen her own understanding and conviction that what we profess is indeed Truth.

Yet, Beth also believes that it is important that she not simply structure and implement our Religious Education programs herself, but that she do so with the help of others.

“I think the input of people throughout our parish is vital to the value of our Religious Education opportunities,” Beth says. “In order to keep our program

vibrant and relevant, we need to constantly reevaluate what we are offering and what our parish needs. The needs of our parish are constantly changing, so our educational opportunities need to change with it.”

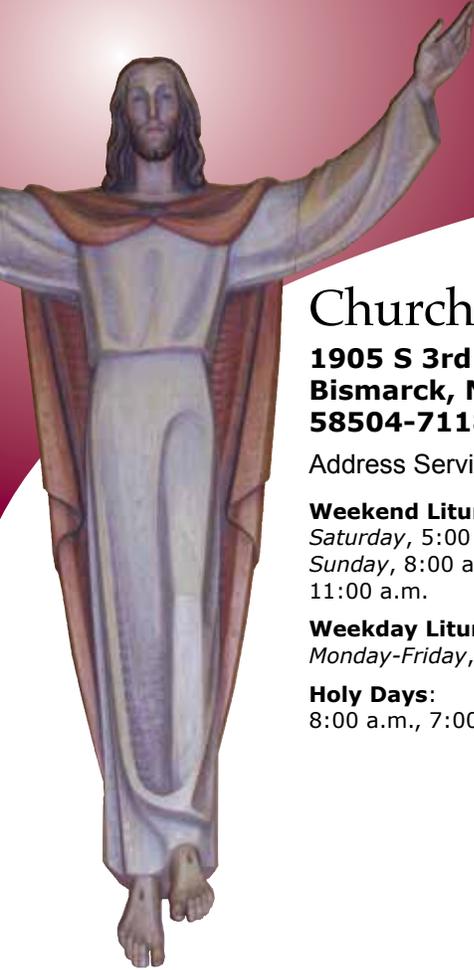
In an effort to effectively minister to the needs of the parish, the Faith Formation committee meets on the first Thursday of every other month to discuss the educational needs of our parish.

“Some are young, some are old, some have children, others don’t,” Beth says. “They are people involved in all different kinds of ministries throughout our parish. And all of their opinions are very valuable to me. We assess the different opportunities we currently offer, we look over curriculum, and we address any changes that people think need to be made.”

The group assesses Religious Education opportunities for children as well as for adults. They are charged with the opportunity to enrich the education of everyone here, and they all take that opportunity seriously.

“It is a blessing to be involved,” says Kristie Schumacher, who serves as a Faith Formation instructor and is a committee member. “Not only have I had the opportunity to impact faith formation here, but I have

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Weekend Liturgy

Saturday, 5:00 p.m.

*Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m.,
11:00 a.m.*

Weekday Liturgy:

Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.

Holy Days:

8:00 a.m., 7:00 p.m.

Forming Our Parish Family

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also learned so much about the things we offer. For instance, I didn't realize there were so many faith formation opportunities for adults until I got involved in the committee. There are lots to get involved in."

Indeed! Ensuring that we are ministering to the educational needs of adults as well as children is an important task for Beth.

"I want to make sure education in the faith doesn't end at Confirmation," she says. "If it did, we would only have an adolescent understanding of the faith. There is so much to learn – you can never know it all."



Beth Kathol encourages us all to seek out Faith Formation opportunities that minister to our particular needs. And, if you have valuable suggestions for the Faith Formation Committee and are interested in getting involved, please contact Beth at 701-258-5692. Often, Beth reaches out to people she sees involved in one aspect of our parish life or another, and asks them to join the committee, but she welcomes those of us who want to get involved to contact her directly.

Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.