

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

CATHOLIC CHURCH

RCIA SPONSORS:

Traveling the Journey with Love

Each year at the Easter Vigil, our parish opens its arms wide to courageous souls who are coming “home” to Rome — the Catholic Church, their spiritual mother on earth. After faithfully searching and praying to discover God’s will for their lives, they have decided to become fully initiated Catholics. Providentially, as they make the magnificent journey towards full communion with Christ’s Church, they have someone to walk alongside of them, supporting them every step of the way with His love.

“A sponsor has many roles — they serve as a companion, a guide, a representative of the Christian community, and a witness for a person going through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) program,” says Deacon Doyle Schulz, Coordinator of the RCIA process. “A sponsor travels through the process of RCIA with a person wishing to join the Catholic faith. As a practicing Catholic sharing their experience, they guide and help the person to understand our Catholic faith. They are an example of Christ to them.”

Further, RCIA sponsors often serve as friends, companions in discipleship,



Each RCIA member has their own unique story of how they realized the beauty of Catholicism, and felt Our Lord’s call to become Catholic. Their walks of faith testify to the powerful, inspiring action of the Holy Spirit alive in the world today. Throughout the RCIA process, their longtime search for the Truth culminates, and they dive into the riches of the “treasure chest” of Catholic teachings.

and mentors to the members as they undergo this remarkable time of spiritual transformation in their lives.

“While we do our best to present our Catholic faith to the people, they may have many questions that they do not want to ask the RCIA presenters, but will ask their sponsor,” Deacon Doyle says. “Their experience is invaluable to the process.”

Each RCIA member has their own unique story of how they realized the beauty of Catholicism, and felt Our Lord’s call to become Catholic. Their

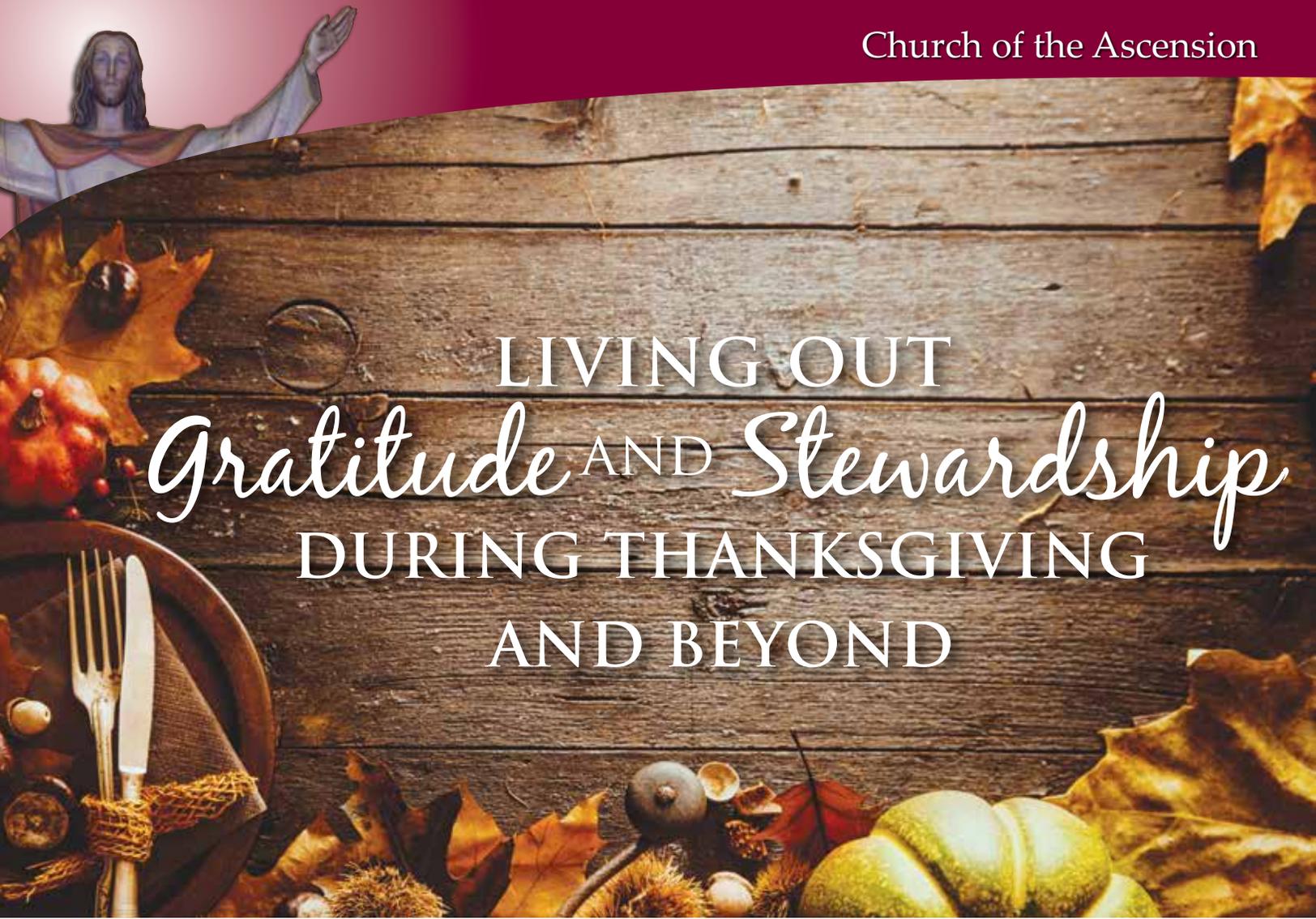
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Inside this Issue

- 2 Living Out Gratitude and Stewardship, During Thanksgiving and Beyond
- 3 November: A Time of Faithful Celebration and Sharing in Thanks
- 4 John Paul Martin *Looking Forward to His Ordination to the Permanent Diaconate*
- 6 Youth Share in Formation, Fellowship and Fun this Autumn
- 7 Ascension’s Eric and Lindsay Miller Grateful for “A Year Full of Blessings”

NOVEMBER 2018

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LIVING OUT *Gratitude* AND *Stewardship* DURING THANKSGIVING AND BEYOND

Every November, as the holiday season fast approaches, we are filled with a deep sense of sentimentality and gratefulness for all the goodness of the past year. At the same time, we encounter many wonderful ways to give — to cheerfully share our own gifts — during this time of Thanksgiving.

It is with this spirit of gratitude that we can truly live out the stewardship way of life. This Thanksgiving, there are plenty of opportunities to do this in a direct way. Is there a new neighbor you haven't met, or someone who might be spending the holiday alone? Invite them over for Thanksgiving dinner. Perhaps you may volunteer at a soup kitchen, or you might donate a Thanksgiving meal to a family in need who wouldn't have one otherwise.

If you go shopping on Black Friday, make it a point the next day to donate old clothes that you or your family members no longer need. And as the winter draws closer, you might participate in — or even organize — a coat drive, and then gather a small group to go out into the community to give the coats away to homeless shelters and those in need

during the winter months. There are countless such opportunities to live in gratitude and thanksgiving — opportunities that go beyond just having a meal with family and friends on the fourth Thursday of November.

Of course, we must remember that this spirit of thanksgiving does not end after Thanksgiving, nor does it end following Advent and Christmas. We must always consider how to give, even as the sentimental glow of the holiday season fades after the New Year. In January, if there is space at your table, fill it. In February, if there is abundance in your closet, give away from that abundance. In March, if there are volunteers needed at the soup kitchen, rally a team and give of your time. We need a renewed spirit of stewardship and thanksgiving that lasts the whole year so that our giving becomes habitual, and not just seasonal.

This Thanksgiving, ask the Holy Spirit where He is calling you to give. And may the joy of the Thanksgiving season flow into our lives as good stewards, every day and throughout the entire year.



NOVEMBER:

A Time OF FAITHFUL *Celebration*
AND SHARING IN THANKS

A Letter from Our Pastor

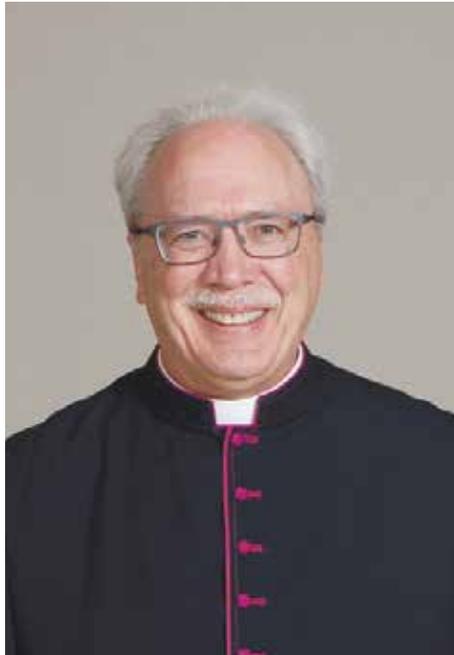
Dear Parishioners,

As I look over the calendar for November, my mind is filled with thoughts of thanksgiving. These aren't just thoughts about Thanksgiving Day, although I look towards it with happy anticipation — more than that, they are thoughts filled with a variety of reasons for why we should be thankful.

The month begins with a great celebration that should be a day of thanksgiving for all of us — All Saints' Day. This is a great feast celebrating the great company of Christians now in heaven — a company we shall eventually join, whether or not we're formally canonized, if we remain faithful to Christ.

And the communion of saints — the sharing of spiritual goods by those in heaven to us who are still in our pilgrimage — is a great cause for thanksgiving. We read the lives of the saints to be encouraged and inspired by their examples. Plus, we are strengthened by their fellowship in the Body of Christ, and we are aided by their prayers.

And then, the very next day, we celebrate All Souls' Day. Although this day commemorates all the faithful departed who are being purified in Purgatory, it is natural for us to concentrate on the members of our own family and our friends who have died. While we pray for them, that they may soon experience the joys of heaven, at the same time we also are thankful for the love they



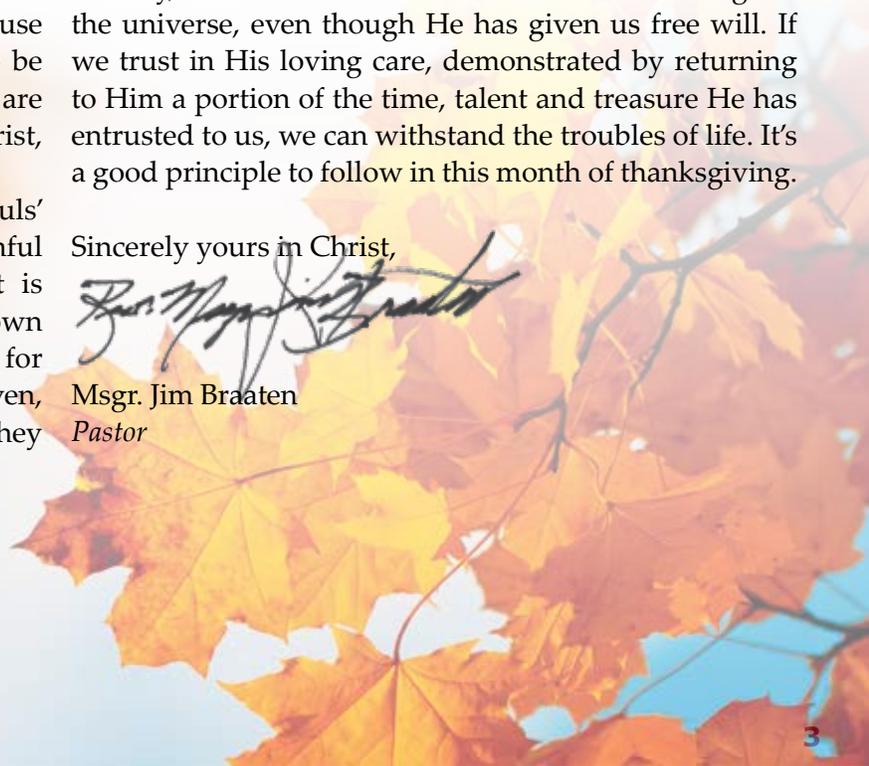
gave us and for the faith they passed on to us.

Then, later in the month comes Thanksgiving Day, the national holiday celebrating all the things for which we are thankful. The fact that it comes toward the end of autumn reminds us that it was originally a harvest festival. For Christians today, it's a wholesome reminder that we should thank God for everything we receive, especially the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Why not participate in the Church's Great Thanksgiving, the Holy Eucharist, on Thanksgiving Day? It's the ultimate way to give thanks.

A reminder — while much of our attention this month may be drawn to the often contentious goings-on in our country, we need to remember that God is in charge of the universe, even though He has given us free will. If we trust in His loving care, demonstrated by returning to Him a portion of the time, talent and treasure He has entrusted to us, we can withstand the troubles of life. It's a good principle to follow in this month of thanksgiving.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten
Pastor





JOHN PAUL

Looking Forward to His Ordination

As John Paul Martin prepares for his ordination to the permanent diaconate at the end of this month, he is grateful for the many people who have helped him along the path to a vocation in the Church. He says he has a wonderful support system, beginning with his wife, Grady, and their children, to Msgr. Braaten and our parish deacons, to the parishioners here at Ascension, and to his fellow students in the diaconate program. While each and every one of these people has been a source of grace for John Paul as he prepared for the diaconate over these past six years, this journey truly began long ago, with the seeds of a vocation planted by the Lord when John Paul was just a child.

Growing up in Pennsylvania, John Paul was raised in the Catholic faith, though his family didn't always attend Mass regularly. When he was as young as 10 years old, he began making the short walk from his home to the nearby Catholic church on his own, always choosing to sit in the front pews where he could see what was happening on the altar. Fascinated by the Holy Mass, he would often bring the missalette home, where he would pretend to be a priest as he read through all of the prayers of the consecration of the Eucharist.

Although John Paul considered a vocation to the priesthood during his high school years, life took him another direction when he was accepted as a student at Penn State. Following graduation, he began working as a meteorologist, and a few years later, he met and fell in love with his wife, Shih-Ru (Grady).

God's plans for John Paul may not have included the priesthood, but it turns out that he would indeed be called to religious life! In 2011, our parish deacons — Deacon Grabar, Deacon Finneman, and Deacon Schulz — all began to encourage John Paul to consider the permanent diaconate. Later, he found out that the idea had originated with Msgr. Braaten.

With the support of our pastor and deacons, John Paul began to discern a clear call to the diaconate.



John Paul Martin and his wife, Grady

"I think it's one of those things — if this were something that you just thought of on your own, there may be a question about whether it's you, or God calling you," John Paul says. "But when you have people telling you, 'You should be a deacon,' it's more likely to be God working through those people. So I came to the conviction that I am being called. It was a tremendous relief to have that 'ah-ha' moment and to know this is something so much bigger than me."

During his time of preparation in the diaconate program, John Paul enjoyed building relationships with and learning from the other candidates.

"I'm being ordained with four other candidates, and the dedication to Jesus Christ in all of them just comes through amazingly," he says. "These men have been an inspiration for me and have helped me take a step closer to becoming holy. Each of us has different strengths and different weaknesses. I learned a lot in talking with my brothers and getting their perspectives. It really got me thinking and opened my eyes to some things."



JOHN PAUL MARTIN

Transition to the Permanent Diaconate



John Paul and Grady Martin with their daughter, Noelle, and son, Austin

Grady has been by John Paul's side throughout the preparation process, attending classes with him — a requirement for all spouses — and as John Paul will be the first to tell you, often taking better notes than the student himself! The couple's children — Austin, 18 and Noelle, 15 — have also been supportive of John Paul's call to religious life.

For the Martins, staying actively engaged in the Church has always been a priority, and both of their teenagers have participated in parish life as hospitality ministers and altar servers.

"Together, Grady and I have worked hard to keep Austin and Noelle close to Jesus Christ and the Church He founded," John Paul says. "I hope that they can instill these things in their children, and that it's important to them that they carry on our Catholic faith."

Looking ahead to his ordination, John Paul is excited about serving people in various capacities, whether it be in administering the Sacrament of Baptism in our parish or working one-on-one with some of the most

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— John Paul Martin

vulnerable members of our community. In addition, he hopes that his preaching will help parishioners make connections between their own lives and the Scripture teachings.

"I look forward to relating through a homily that these things in the Bible from thousands of years ago apply today, and will still apply tomorrow," he says. "My hope is to use my experience in communication to be able to take something from that reading from the weekend and apply it to everyday life, relating it to today."

John Paul Martin will be ordained to the permanent diaconate at 2 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 30, at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck. Let us all keep John Paul and his family in our prayers as they continue on the journey of his vocation to religious life!



Youth Share in Formation, Fellowship and Fun this Autumn

Our Ascension youth have enjoyed a number of opportunities this fall to grow in their faith, while sharing in fellowship and forming friendships with one another.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov. 1

Solemnity of All Saints,
Mass Times are 8 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Nov. 2

Mass of Remembrance for All Souls' Day
at 7 p.m. followed by a light reception in the church
gathering space.

Nov. 10

Blessing of Deacon Ray Grabar at the 5 p.m. Mass
followed by a dinner retirement reception in the
Community Room. All are invited!

Nov. 11

KC Breakfast from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
in the Community Room.

Nov. 14

Parent/Child Retreat for
First Reconciliation from 4-8 p.m.

Nov. 22

Thanksgiving Day Mass at 8 a.m.

Nov. 30

Ordination of John Paul Martin to the permanent
diaconate at 2 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit,
followed by a dinner reception at 5 p.m. in the Community
Room at Ascension Church. All are invited!



Ascension's Eric and Lindsay Miller Grateful for "A Year Full of Blessings"



Ascension's Eric and Lindsay Miller



Ascension's Eric and Lindsay Miller with their baby girl, Gianna

It is often during times of deep sadness or profound joy that we experience Christ and grow closer to Him and each other. During this past year, Eric and Lindsay Miller have been blessed with a period of profound joy.

"This year has been full of blessings, which we are so grateful for, and we know that without God none of it was possible," Eric says. "We got married, moved into a new house and welcomed our baby girl, Gianna, into the world all within the last 12 months, and we couldn't be happier."

Eric was first drawn to Ascension in 2005 because of its warm community, and Lindsay joined the parish a year ago after they were married in September. They both appreciate Msgr. Braaten and have formed and continue to form relationships with many other parishioners.

"When I joined, I remember that everyone at Ascension was very welcoming," Eric says. "I really liked the people and the clergy, and the Mass reminded me of the parish I grew up in, St. Anthony's in Donnybrook, N.D., which unfortunately just closed this year."

When Eric was asked to join the Stewardship Committee, he felt like the timing was right for him, as he had wanted to become more involved but just hadn't taken that step.

Then, Eric nudged Lindsay into considering giving with the parish's Hospitality Ministry, and after trying

the ministry a few times, Lindsay really began to enjoy serving the faith community in this way.

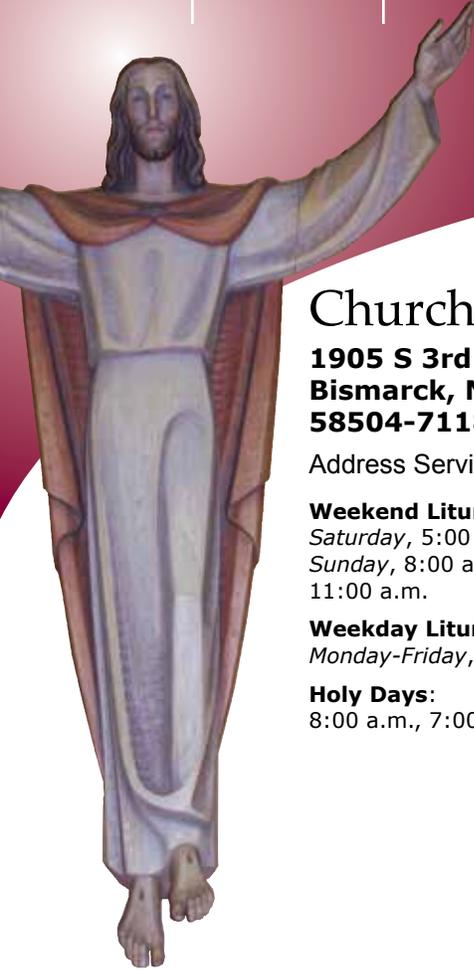
"It feels more like a close family once you get to know a few people at Ascension," Eric says. "We strongly recommend getting involved. Joining the hospitality team and helping during Mass is great way to get your feet wet, but there are several committees and other groups that could use some help also."

Today, Eric serves as the Chairman of the Stewardship Committee, and he and Lindsay both help with hospitality at the 9:30 a.m. Sunday Mass. They also believe in being generous with weekly contributions at Ascension and supporting the God's Share Appeal every year.

"Prayer is also very important to us as we try to grow closer to God," Eric says. "In addition to morning, mealtime and evening prayers, we've kept a tradition from our home parishes by praying before and after Mass."

As they begin their young family, Eric and Lindsay are grateful to be part of a community where they can grow closer to Christ alongside their parish family.

"Thank you to everyone at Ascension for making it such a great parish," Eric says. "It's been a great environment to grow in our faith and become more involved with the church. We can honestly say that in our experience, the more you give, the more you get back."



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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.

RCIA Sponsors *continued from front cover*

walks of faith testify to the powerful, inspiring action of the Holy Spirit alive in the world today. Throughout the RCIA process, their longtime search for the Truth culminates, and they dive into the riches of the “treasure chest” of Catholic teachings.

“I hope the members come away from RCIA with an understanding of why we Catholics have such a deep love for our faith and our Church,” Deacon Doyle says. “I hope they see how what we believe is all based on Church history and the sacraments, and that they want to join us. After they have completed RCIA, they often

tell us that they have learned many things about their newfound faith and why Catholics do things a certain way.”

Those who give their time to this ministry find themselves truly blessed in return.

“It has been my privilege to serve as the RCIA Coordinator for the last 12 years,” Deacon Doyle says. “Every year, I get to meet people who want to join our beautiful Church, and I have had the joy of seeing them receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion. It doesn’t get any better than that!”

The only requirement to serve as a sponsor is to be a confirmed, practicing Catholic. Although most RCIA members already have someone in mind to sponsor them, at times there are some that do not have anyone, and are in need of a volunteer sponsor. For more information on how to serve as an RCIA sponsor, or about the RCIA process in general, please contact Deacon Doyle Schulz at 701-223-0287, or email him at doyleschulz@yahoo.com.

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.