

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Youth Faith Formation Strengthening Belief, One Wednesday at a Time

You've heard the phrase "one day at a time"? Ascension Faith Formation is hoping the children of our parish will give them one Wednesday at a time to grow in their friendship with Jesus.

The Children/Youth Faith Formation Program is built around kids in grades

one through nine and their busy parents. Wednesday evening sessions run throughout the school year to make sure children are connecting the dots of a faith-filled life between Sundays.

"I think faith formation is so important because it exposes children to

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Children/Youth Faith Formation strives to create a lasting sense of belonging as young people connect the dots between Mass, class time, and what they're learning about their faith at home. Classes also allow them to spend time in fellowship.

AUGUST 2018

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ascensionbismarck.org



Youth Faith Formation *continued from front cover*

the truth of the faith and the teachings of the faith, which will enable them to become the happiest and best people they can be," says Jessica Mattson, Faith Formation Director. "If you start young with kids, it's easier to make it important and a priority in the future."

Ava Weidner, a 9-year-old fourth-grader at Sunrise Elementary School, is a current Faith Formation student and says she has enjoyed learning prayers like the Act of Contrition and prayers before meals, as well as spending time in and around the church.

"If you don't know anything about Jesus, you will most likely learn the answer to any question you ask," Ava says of what she's learned in Faith Formation classes.

This year's classes will kick off on Sept. 12 with a special Mass and a grill-out sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. From there, classes will continue until May 15 every Wednesday evening at 4 p.m., 5:30 p.m., and 7 p.m. depending on grade level.

"Our goal is to have it fit school schedules," Jessica says. "We try to offer them a variety of choices based on what works for their schedules and spreading them out so that we don't have 250 kids here at one time."

Jessica says she wants parents to know that Faith Formation is there



"A good catechist is someone who primarily loves the Church and has a deep love for Jesus, and the kids sense that," says Jessica Mattson, parish Faith Formation Director. Students in grades one through nine experience that love during Faith Formation classes held each Wednesday.

to continue the work that they're already doing at home by bringing their children to Mass and talking about what they believe.

"It really has to be a family tradition of going and participating, and later discussing what they've learned," she says. "I think there's a connection between their faith lessons at home and what they learn here. Their faith will make their children happy in this life and the next. It starts one Wednesday at a time — one Wednesday and one conversation at a time. If they hear it one Wednesday and then don't think about it again, it doesn't stick. It has

to be an ongoing conversation with families."

Children/Youth Faith Formation is always looking for committed volunteers to help teach classes as catechists. Jessica says experience in teaching isn't as important as a love that they can pass on.

"We're looking for catechists and it is a big commitment, but I think the rewards are even greater," she says. "I think a good catechist is someone who primarily loves the Church and has a deep love for Jesus, and the kids sense that. They're able to teach really well if they have that wellspring to draw from."

Registration for classes began July 1, and families can register online at ascensionbismarck.org/children-youth-formation, use the packet that was mailed home, or call the parish office at 701-223-3606. Volunteers who wish to help with classes may contact Jessica directly at 701-258-5692.



A Letter from Our Pastor

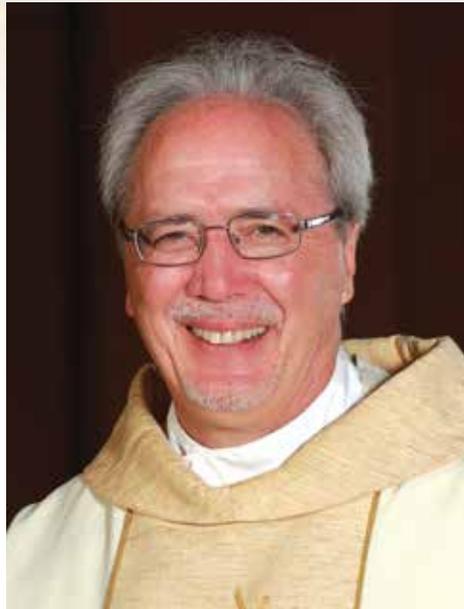
As Summer Winds Down, Fall Back into Stewardship

Dear Parishioners,

August has traditionally been regarded as a summer month — a continuation of July with a few differences, namely back-to-school sales that arrive during the month. But now, many schools begin the academic year in August, with the ever-present back-to-school sales falling even earlier in July.

So do we regard August as “still summer” or “the beginning of fall”? While I don’t have an answer to that question, I do know that it’s a time when we should be thinking about how we’re going to serve as Christian disciples and stewards once the fall routines begin.

Even for adults long out of school, the concept of “summer vacation” has a strong hold on us. Sure, some take vacations in the fall to see the leaves, or in winter for skiing or to see family during the Christmas season — but we still think of the summer as *the* time for vacations. Many also have the preconceived notion that “nothing happens” in our parish over the summer. Yes, Mass is still regularly celebrated, and there are weddings and funerals. But otherwise, the



parish is a quieter place during the summer months... isn’t it?

Of course, that is certainly not the case. In parishes across America, there are summer programs like Vacation Bible School for the children, and youth groups are attending conferences and sharing in service projects in areas of need. In addition, both our staff and our volunteers are busy during the summer, as they prepare for all “normally scheduled” activities that resume after Labor Day.

That brings me to my main point — how are *you* preparing to serve as a steward once Labor Day is past? Have you thought of how you can best serve the Lord Jesus with the talent He has entrusted to you? Have you planned how you can arrange your schedule to offer Him more of your time in prayer, worship and study? Have you considered how your budget might be rearranged to share more of the treasure in your care?

Maybe our Lord is inviting you to teach religious education, or to work with the youth, or to visit shut-ins, or to volunteer at a food bank, or to sing in the choir, or to attend weekday Mass, or... well, you get the idea. While we count down the days and wait for autumn to arrive, we can use our time to evaluate how we can be better disciples, better stewards and better Christians — this fall and throughout the rest of our lives.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten
Pastor



Built to Withstand the Elements:

Last year, the Parish Finance Council addressed the need for the replacement of the church roof. Bids for this project came in between \$90,000-\$125,000. While the parish was able to collect some funds from a hail insurance claim on the roof last summer, we were still left with over half the funds to raise. The roof work began on June 18th and was completed within one week! We were blessed with perfect weather conditions that helped the project go incredibly smooth. The new roof is a quality steel product that resembles asphalt and it looks amazing! We have received numerous compliments from parishioners and neighbors.

We would like to thank AnyLeaks Inc. for the outstanding quality of work they provided with this project. Also, we thank our Maintenance Director, Bob Urlacher, for all the time, attention and groundwork he put in to make this project a reality.

Due to the generosity of our parishioners, our goal of raising \$50,000 is well underway with total donations reaching \$40,000. **That still leaves us with a balance of \$10,000 to cover.** Please consider making a financial gift if you have not done so already. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!





Ascension Has a New Roof!





Stewardship: The Four Pillars

You've heard about the three Ts of stewardship, but what about the four Ps?

The three Ts – Time, Talent, and Treasure – describe the personal gifts we offer to the Church. The four Ps are the Four Pillars of Parish Stewardship described by the renowned pastor Msgr. Thomas McGread. They are the hallmark of a stewardship parish – Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. Let's take a look at each of them to understand how we can improve in each area.

Hospitality

Christian Kindness

"When I was a stranger, you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). The Gospel teaches that whenever we welcome the least of our brothers or sisters, we welcome Christ Himself. That is why the first mark of a stewardship parish is hospitality. Being friendly is one of the first ways we can be Christ-like toward others.

Modern Catholic parishes are often so large and have so many Masses that many parishioners don't know one another. To create a sense of community, be sure to smile and greet others as you enter and exit the Church. Let's try harder than ever to be a welcoming community.

Prayer

Heart-to-Heart with God

"Do not become so involved in the work of the Lord that you forget the Lord of the work," a seminary professor once taught. In other words, don't get so caught up with parish projects and outreach efforts that you forget to draw aside to spend time with God in prayer. Every great saint has taught that prayer is the most essential component in the life of the Christian. Through prayer, we nurture our most important relationship – the one that will last for all eternity.

A healthy prayer life should include communal prayer such as Mass, as well as personal prayer and

family prayer. The two biggest obstacles to prayer are lack of time and lack of understanding of how to pray. We have to schedule time for prayer just as we would for an important appointment. And we have to learn how to pray from other people. Many saints have written spiritual books that describe different methods of prayer.

Formation

Continuous Conversion

Pope John Paul II always emphasized ongoing conversion. From childhood through adulthood, our whole life must be a process of drawing closer to God. He never stops calling us forward to learn more and to examine ourselves more deeply.

Very often our society values material things more than interior virtues. But as personal experience shows, when we finally acquire the car or house or "toy" that we wanted so badly, it doesn't really satisfy. On the other hand, we don't tend to desire spiritual virtues with the same kind of longing, but when we actually have them, we find them far more rewarding than material things.

Service

Love in Action

"Amen I say to you, whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). This Scripture was one of St. Teresa of Calcutta's favorites. Each time she picked up a poor and hungry child, she knew she was ministering to Christ. While we may not view ourselves as saints, we too are called to such heroic service right within our own community. As St. Teresa of Calcutta said, "To be a saint is not the privilege of a few, but the duty of everyone."

We have many service opportunities right here within our own parish. If you have the willingness to serve and take the initiative to find where you are needed, you'll find that there is no end to the families and individuals who truly need help. How can you reach out to them in love?



Working Together to Serve:

***** *The Ladies of Ascension* *****

Sometimes, it's amazing to see what can be accomplished with prayer, a little work, and people coming together for a good cause. This is the mission of our Ladies of Ascension — to see needs in the parish and find ways to fill them.

The ladies meet monthly to pray, listen to a speaker, and plan upcoming events and projects. One of the ways the Ladies of Ascension (LOA) serves the parish is by preparing meals for funeral luncheons following the death of a parishioner.

“Our biggest outreach is providing food and serving our funeral luncheons,” says Rita Ritter, who works as a part-time secretary at Ascension and serves as the President of the LOA. “That’s been our primary purpose, to provide food for the funeral luncheons and it’s beautiful.

“So many people will call and say, ‘I love to bake, I love to prepare a salad,’” she adds. “It’s their form of stewardship and giving of their talents. In the luncheon, we can provide for our grieving families, and it gives our parishioners a sense of ‘This is what our parish does for my family.’ It’s just so fulfilling — not just for the people providing, but also for those partaking.”

Recently, the LOA has also fulfilled an important role, working with the Knights of Columbus to begin renovating the parish kitchen.

“It’s been talked about in the parish for years, that we have to do something different in the kitchen, and we took it upon ourselves to get quotes and ideas from businesses and spearheaded publicizing it,” Rita says. “We worked together with the K of C to purchase items as part of the kitchen renovation.”

The renovations included changing the cabinetry, purchasing a large new stainless steel work table, putting in coffee/beverage station and installing an icemaker.

“The end result is that people are so proud of this kitchen,” Rita says. “My biggest goal is trying to convey to the parish that when we work together, look at what we can do.”

The LOA also hosts two annual bake sales to raise funds for various needs around the parish and is responsible for cleaning the altar server albs. In addition, they provide our newly baptized babies with a beautiful pink or blue blanket and baptismal bib, all handmade by LOA members.

Rita hopes to remind parishioners that all of the women of the parish are automatically members of the LOA, regardless of how active a role they take. In order to encourage more people to become involved in whatever way they are able, the LOA has begun sending out the meeting minutes to anyone interested in knowing about upcoming activities.

“Even if ladies are unable to attend the meetings, this serves as a way to show them what we are doing, and what talents or treasures they can contribute even if they don’t attend the morning meetings,” Rita says.

Rita encourages her fellow parishioners to consider becoming involved with the LOA.

“Please come and join us!” she says. “Share an hour of your time with us. We’d love to hear your ideas, we’d love to hear what more we could do for the betterment of Ascension Parish.”



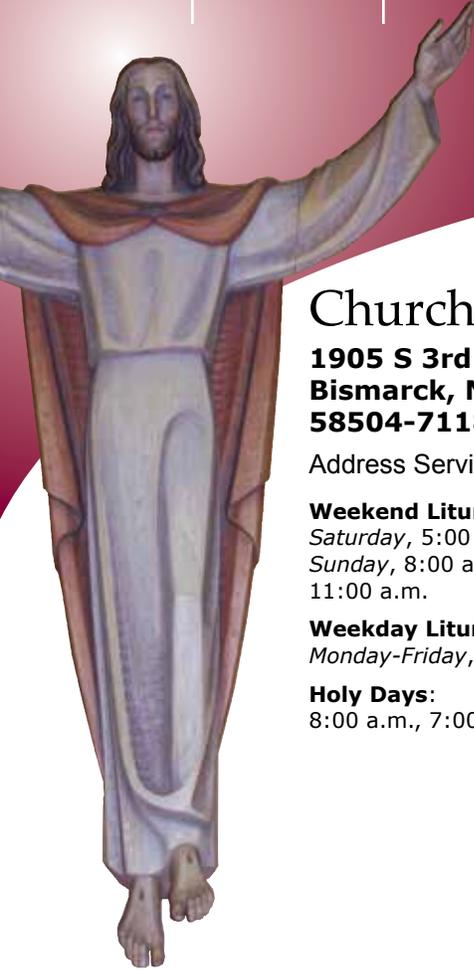
New cabinetry and counter tops enhance the kitchen.



A new beverage station with sink, storage and an industrial coffee maker adds much more functionality for our large parish events.



If you would like more information, or to become involved in Ladies of Ascension, please contact LOA President Rita Ritter at 701-223-3606 or rritter@ascensionbismarck.org. The LOA will hold a membership drive this October. Monthly LOA meetings are held at 8:30 a.m. on the second Wednesday of every month, September through May.



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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.

Upcoming Events

Aug. 15

Feast of the
Assumption of Mary
Mass at 8 a.m.
and 7 p.m.

Aug. 29

Seventh, eighth
and ninth grades —
Confirmation Meetings

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.