



# St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## In this Issue:

- 2 Celebrating the Easter Vigil, the “Mother of All Vigils”
- 3 Give Thanks to the Lord, It Is Right and Just
- 4 Building a Foundation of Faith: The Runge Family
- 6 Making Special Time for God: The Importance of Youth in the Church

## “Don’t Be Afraid!”

### Meet Seminarian Nicholas Sentovich

When Nicholas Sentovich was a freshman at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, he felt the Holy Spirit nudging him. Today, he’s very thankful he listened.

“While in college, I discerned more deeply the call of the Lord, and felt a small tug on my heart to join the seminary,” he says. “I went to a book study led by our college chaplain, and he encouraged me to be open to God’s will. I had the opportunity to bring this call to the Lord in prayer during Eucharistic Adoration, as well as discuss it with some of my friends.”

Now a student of Second Theology at the North American College in Rome, Nicholas is glad he has spent time searching for his vocation, instead of just going about his daily life, following his own will alone. In the end, he has been blessed with the satisfaction of knowing he is pleasing Christ — and interestingly, doing what he wanted deep down anyhow.



*Nicholas Sentovich and his family in Rome*

“I would say that God’s will and what we ultimately desire aren’t necessarily different,” he says. “While a particular vocation might not attract us at first, God works through our desires to draw us closer to Him. So, we choose a vocation because God invites us to it, but also because it’s something that we really desire, too!”

Arriving at such a beautiful point along the path of Christian maturity,

*continued on back cover*

# St. John the Baptist

## Celebrating the Easter Vigil, the “Mother of All Vigils”

As the sun wanes on Holy Saturday, the universal community of the faithful will gather for the Easter Vigil, the pinnacle of the liturgical year. As sung in the *Exsultet*, the Easter Proclamation, “this is the night.” This is the night when Christ triumphed over sin and death and “rose victorious from the underworld.”

During the Easter Vigil, the Church awaits and then celebrates Christ’s resurrection with a sacred liturgy that draws upon rich symbolic traditions to highlight our transition from death to life, from darkness to light.

The very atmosphere in the church space as we gather on the evening of Holy Saturday prepares us for the Easter Vigil. Tangible signs throughout the church represent Christ’s entombment. The holy water fonts stand empty, the tabernacle lies devoid of Christ’s presence and the sanctuary lamp is fittingly extinguished.

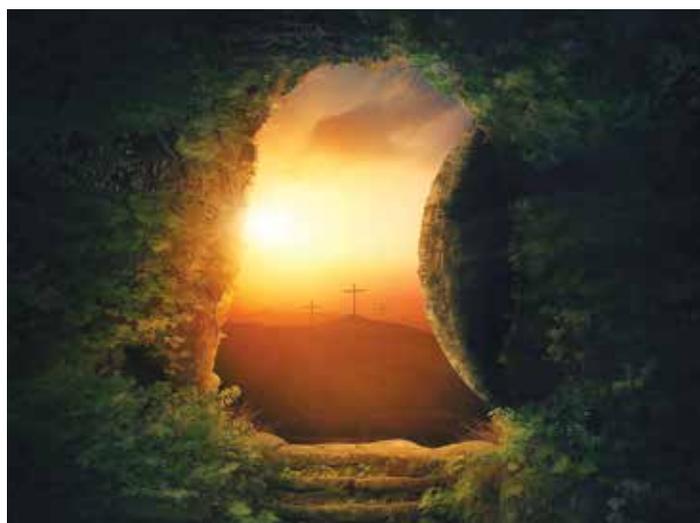
According to the Church’s rubrics for the liturgical year, the vigil should take place during the night, and its unique four-part structure sets the celebration apart from all other liturgies.

With the church shrouded in darkness, the celebration begins with the Service of Light, during which the faithful gather outside around a blazing fire that draws the community together.

During the Service of Light, the Paschal candle, the central sacramental of the Easter Vigil liturgy, is brought forward. The candle represents Christ, the light of the world, and the faithful process into the church following the candle, which brightens the darkened space. At this time, the candles held by the community are lit from the Paschal candle, and the Easter Proclamation is sung.

Following the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word is proclaimed, and passages from the Old and New Testament show God’s intervention throughout salvation history. We sing the *Alleluia* for the first time since the commencement of the Lenten season.

Then, in the Liturgy of Baptism, we welcome the candidates and catechumens who have prepared in a particular way throughout the Lenten season to enter the Church.



Alongside the new members of the community, we renew our own baptismal promises during this holy night.

Lastly, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ – in His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – becomes present in the consecrated bread and wine. The Blessed Sacrament is once again in the tabernacle, and the sanctuary lamp is illuminated.

As we anticipate the Easter Vigil, the “turning point of the Triduum,” we can prepare ourselves for this sacred liturgy by renewing our Lenten resolutions and our desire for complete conversion to Christ. We can read the Liturgy of Word for the Easter Vigil, meditating on Christ’s loving and powerful actions on the behalf of His beloved people.

With the transition from the 40 days of Lent into the 50 days of the Easter season, we can find small daily ways to celebrate this time of rejoicing. Perhaps we will light a symbolic candle each evening, welcoming the light of Christ, or decorate our domestic churches with signs of the Resurrection from white linens to spring greenery.

Throughout these blessed weeks of the Easter season, the Paschal candle is illuminated at the beginning of each liturgy as a tangible reminder of our ongoing faith journey and our daily turning from the darkness of sin to the light of Christ.

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

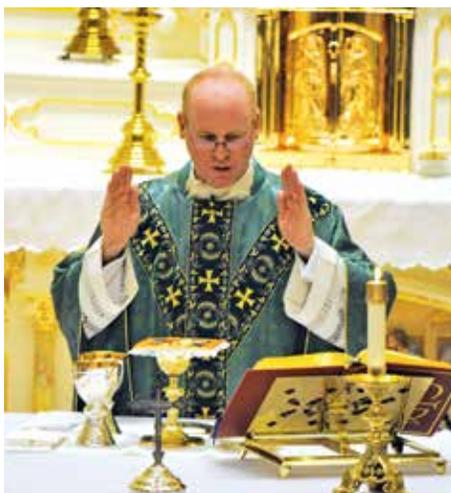
## Give Thanks to the Lord, It Is Right and Just

Dear Parishioners,

Every time I prepare my monthly letter to you in this newsletter, I am reminded how thankful 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, it gets me to think about or reflect upon the holiest things I do. By far, the holiest is celebrating Mass, and especially consecrating the bread and wine so Christ becomes present among us. “Consecration” is the act of “dedicating something to God, sanctifying it and making it holy.” 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 culmination – the consecration of and reception of 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, and I encourage you to do the same 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 perfect form of prayer.

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 Mass. It is something we may answer 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 given – 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 Sacred Host is filled with meaning. We say, “The Body of Christ,” and you reply, “Amen.” In that instance, “Amen” means “Yes, I do believe this is Jesus.” “I do believe that Jesus is present in His full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.” In our Catholic faith, we are blessed, particularly in the gift of the Mass. Happy Easter!

In Christ,

*Fr. Butler*  
Fr. Butler, Pastor

## Building a Foundation

When Michele and Erick Runge moved their family to this area nine years ago, they began attending St. John the Baptist with Michele's grandfather and longtime parishioner, Clarence Schnitz. Before long, they had become parishioners here, as well. And, even though Clarence passed away a year ago, the Runge family still sits in his church pew – pew number 10 – each and every Sunday. By now, the Runges have gotten to know all of the parishioners in the surrounding pews, and recently they have made a commitment to get even more involved with the church.

The family's participation in parish life first increased when Michele and Erick's children – Alex, 14, and Piper, 12 – began serving at the altar. Both children enjoy being able to serve in a way that draws them closer to the celebration of the Eucharist.

"It's fun to participate as an altar server," Alex says. "I feel like I follow the Mass a little bit more now."

Last summer, the Runge children were able to develop their faith life even more by attending Camp WOW Catholic Summer Camp in Millington. There with about 20 other kids from our parish and many more from other parishes around the area, Alex and



*The Runge family (from left) Erick, Piper, Alex, and Michele*

Piper spent several days combining traditional camp activities like canoeing and outdoor games with the opportunity to dig deeper into their Catholic faith.

Both siblings greatly enjoyed this unique camp experience.

"It was really fun," Piper says. "I liked that we got to be in groups with people that we knew and some that we didn't know, so we got to meet new people and make friends. We also had Mass every day and had adoration at Camp WOW."

For Michele, witnessing her kids' desire to be more involved in their faith is a rewarding experience in and of itself. But recently, she, too, has begun to participate more in parish life. Michele's decision to more actively live out her faith came, at least in part, with the loss of her grandfather.

"Meeting my grandpa at Mass on Sundays was something that I had with him that no one else in my family had," Michele explains. "When he passed, I cried, of course. But when

# n of Faith: The Runge Family

I went to church that Sunday, I really bawled, because going to Mass was such a special thing I had with him. So that loss probably had a little bit of an effect on me wanting to get more involved.”

This year, Michele helped three other women organize the parish Mardi Gras celebration, a positive experience that showed her how rewarding service to the church can be.

“I’m really glad that I did it,” Michele says. “It was really fun! I knew the other three women through my kids, so it was easy to be with peers. It was nice to get involved, to meet new people, and to give back a little.”

For Erick, who was raised Lutheran but finds many similar tra-

ditions in the Catholic faith, attending church together weekly is an important family value. Although he stays very busy between his work as an electrician and as a farmer, making the time to model strong faith and values for his children is one of his top priorities.

“I was asked to help clean up at the Corned Beef and Cabbage dinner, and there was a little bit of juggling I had to do to fit it in around work,” Erick says. “But I think it’s pretty important to lead by example, and I try to make it clear to the kids that they need to help out, too. I think [the kids’ service to the parish] is good for them, and it’s also good for me. It does make you happy that the work you’re doing as a parent is paying off.”

For a busy and active young family, it is not always easy to make room for stewardship, but families like the Runges find that they receive truly priceless rewards in return for the time and talent they share. By making their faith life a priority, the Runges hope to provide their children with the experiences and examples that will continue to keep them on the right path into the future.

“We always have somewhere to go or something to do, but we always make sure we go to church every weekend,” Michele says. “Growing up, I went through the whole religion class, First Communion, and went every week to Mass with my family. We always did these things when I was little, so I want to give Alex and Piper the same foundation to build on.”

## Holy Week Schedule

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Communal Penance Service – 7 p.m. on April 10th

Holy Thursday Mass – 7 p.m.

Good Friday Service – 3 p.m.

Easter Basket Blessing – 10 a.m. on Holy Saturday

Easter Vigil – 7:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday Mass at regular times – 8 and 10:30 a.m.



## Making Special Time for God:

Though the Catholic Church is old and steeped with tradition, this does not make it archaic or limited to the elderly. Our faith is a living, breathing thing, defined by both its canon of beliefs and its members, who remain ever old and ever new. Our beloved Pope St. John Paul II understood this, placing great value on the importance of youth in the Church throughout his papacy. He once said, “The future is in your hearts and in your hands. God is entrusting to you the task, at once difficult and uplifting, of working with Him in the building of the *civilization of love*.”

Here at St. John the Baptist, parishioner Michelle Harms, a high school junior, is fully aware of the important part she plays as a young person in the Church today. Though busy with school and normal teenage activities, Michelle manages to make time for altar serving, singing with the choir, student teaching for the Religious Education program, and faithfully attending the YDisciple program.

“Most kids don’t think they have a say in things or that they are important to the Church – but actual-

ly, we have more to give than anyone else,” Michelle says. “Unlike adults, we can go out and serve with the freedom of not having work and other responsibilities. There is nothing holding us back from going to Feed My Starving Children or from giving of ourselves every day to those in need.”

A natural “people person,” Michelle enjoys meeting new people and learning about their lives. In the process, she gains important insight into her own faith life and what she needs to “continue to work on” in order to improve.

“I love getting involved in things,” Michelle says. “It helps me see how everything I’m doing can benefit others. It helps me take the focus off myself and to center more on the people I see every day and how I can help them.”

During her early years of high school, Michelle appreciated the faith foundation she received through St. John the Baptist’s Confirmation program. Gathering weekly in preparation for the final Sacrament of Christian Initiation, these classes help give youth a



*Every couple of weeks, YDisciple groups break from their normal routines to attend Eucharistic Adoration, receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and enjoy games and fellowship with one another.*

# The Importance of Youth in the Church

deeper understanding of the Catholic faith while also encouraging them to cultivate a personal relationship with Christ.

Following Confirmation, teens are able to join the relatively new YDisciple program. Meeting weekly in gender exclusive small groups, YDisciple is designed to allow young men and women to delve into their faith within a close-knit environment. Hosted by adult mentors, gatherings include games and icebreakers, fellowship, sharing, and discussions centered on various faith topics. Then, typically every five weeks, the group breaks from its traditional format for an evening of Eucharistic Adoration and Reconciliation followed by games and fellowship.

According to parishioner and YDisciple mentor Mike Short, this is an essential part of building up the young Church.

“You need to create an environment for teenagers where they can relax and be themselves – where they can truly be comfortable, allowing them to have those deeper conversations and to really learn about the faith,” Mike says. “What is really good about YDisciple is that trust is formed. The young men know they can ask questions or share with-



*Parishioner Michelle Harms with (from left) Marta Salgado, Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers and Haley Jansen.*

out being concerned that it will be shared in the locker room or around the lunch table at school.”

“It gives us a kind of constant support and helps us to continuously make that special time for God,” Michelle adds. “With the YDisciple group, you have that close bond that’s been built over a year of really sharing. We know we can talk to each other about anything.”

Periodically, there are also opportunities for youth to come together for group socialization or acts of service. For Mardi Gras, for example, teens served in the kitchen preparing the food, serving the food and cleaning dishes,

and in early February they went to Feed My Starving Children to prepare meal packages for third world countries. In this way, parish youth are given a greater sense of the Church at large, as well as their important role within it.

“I think they get to see stewardship in action and become part of it through these opportunities,” Mike says. “It is important to remember that stewardship is more than just money and more than just time, even, to a certain extent. Most importantly of all, it’s about developing that relationship with Christ and spending time with Him in prayer and adoration.”

*All youth of the parish are encouraged to become more involved in parish life, using their time and talents to help build that “civilization of love.” Please look to the bulletin for information on upcoming retreats and events. To get involved or learn more about the YDisciple program, please call Mike Short at 815-826-0349.*



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### Mass Times

Saturdays 5:00 PM  
Sundays 8:00 and 10:30 AM  
Weekdays:  
Tuesdays 6:30 PM  
M, W, Th, F 7:00 AM

### Sacrament of Reconciliation

Tuesdays 5:00 PM  
Saturdays 4:00 PM  
or by appointment

### Adoration

Tuesdays 5-6 PM and  
First Fridays 7:30 AM-9:00 PM with  
Benediction 9:00 PM

## Meet Seminarian Nicholas Sentovich *continued from front cover*

however, did not happen without the help of his parents, friends and parish community.

“Many people have helped to nurture my vocation,” he says. “Certainly, the witness of my parents in the faith plays a foundational role. I was also blessed to be at a parish growing up that fostered a Christian community – there, I made many friends that have supported me and I them.”

These days, Nicholas is truly enjoying his seminary formation, which he finds is not only preparing him well for the priesthood, but also helping him grow as a person in extraordinary ways.

“I have really enjoyed our preaching courses because they have given me the opportunity to bring my study of theology into a pastoral dimension – it has been an enriching and exciting experience,” he says. “I am also currently working at a local prison, which has challenged me both intellectually and pastorally.”

And, despite Nicholas’ profound faith and dedication to fulfilling God’s call upon his heart, he is like

most other great Catholic young men out there – enjoying life to the full.

“I love to read and watch movies for fun, and I enjoy playing sports and exercising as well,” Nicholas says. “Finally, I like studying in Rome. It is a real joy. We get to have the experience of being next door neighbors with the pope, explore beautiful churches and make friends with the saints. Our universities are international, so I have had the opportunity to make friends with men and women from different countries and religious orders.”

When asked what he would say to young people to inspire them to think about pursuing a religious or priestly vocation, he suggests talking to the vocation director or another priest about seminary life and discernment. He also offers encouragement.

“Don’t be afraid!” he says. “God’s call is for us to be happy. A vocation is a call to joy in God and to His service in some way. He wants us to be free to serve Him, and religious and priestly vocations, rather than being vocations that ‘restrict’ us, free us up to serve God in a unique way.”