



# St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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## Extraordinary Ministers Share God's Greatest Gift

When Greg McElhaney serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, he knows exactly what he's doing, and just Who is in his hands. His testimony of faith is extraordinary, and it reminds us of the phenomenal gift that God has given us in the Eucharist.

"I was raised Catholic, but at one point in my life, I had quit going to Mass and became a deacon and a youth minister in the Assembly of God church," he says. "Members of their denomination don't believe the Eucharist really is the Body and Blood of Christ. One day, however, I read something written by St. Ignatius of Antioch in the second century that said a Christian must believe that the Eucharist truly is the Body and Blood of Christ or they are a heretic."

And, after coming across these words of St. Ignatius, "coming home" to the Catholic Church for Greg was inevitable.

"I realized either I was a heretic, or St. Ignatius and St. John – Christ's 'right-hand-man' who wrote about His real presence in the Eucharist – were heretics," Greg says. "I realized it was much more likely that what I believed was wrong, and what they believed was right. From that point on, I knew I had to come to Mass and start believing the teachings of the Church, one by one. The Eucharist brought me back to the Catholic Church."



*Delores Devine distributes the Body of Christ*

*continued on page 5*

## The Challenge of Discipleship

**G**od calls us to give Him everything – our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind. This is the challenge of discipleship – a lifelong process of more fully placing our lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The reason that God can ask such complete service from us is that He made us. Everything we have belongs to Him! This includes our intelligence, our physical ability, our artistic talent, our family, our finances, our government – anything we may typically think of as “ours.”

It takes courage to recognize that we are not the masters of our possessions and ourselves. Furthermore, as Christians, we believe that because everything we have is a gift from God, we are called to give Him thanks. We express our thanks by using our gifts to further His kingdom on earth. This is the basis for our understanding of stewardship.

We refer to “time,” “talent,” and “treasure” in order to differentiate between the various parts of our life that belong to God. “Time” is the duration of life that God has given us. “Talent” includes the special gifts or strengths God has nurtured in us. “Treasure” is what we have earned through our time and talent.

Even though we identify these three aspects of stewardship, they are still part of the same Gospel-based concept. And even when we focus sepa-

rately on these parts, it should not signal that one is more important than the other. Instead, focusing on each aspect one at a time helps us to better concentrate on that area in our lives.

Stewardship is, after all, an attitude. If our goal is to become better stewards, we must have a reason in our minds to do so. Here are the basics of a stewardship attitude:

### ***“God made everything!”***

A wholehearted trust that God made all things is essential to understanding stewardship. Recognizing God as the Creator is one of the most basic, profound beliefs of Christianity.

### ***“I am truly blessed!”***

It takes humility in order to truly acknowledge God’s goodness. Every great triumph and every little pleasure is a blessing from above, and every strong character trait we possess is a gift from God.

### ***“I believe I am to use God’s gifts for His glory!”***

What better way to thank God for His goodness than by using our personal gifts to glorify Him? We are not the owners of our time, talent or treasure. But we are caretakers given the responsibility of spreading God’s kingdom on earth.



*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## Summer Vacations Are Coming to an End... Now What?

Dear Parishioners,

The month of August really does seem to return us to reality, doesn't it? Summer is coming to an end – maybe not officially on the calendar, but in terms of our lives and the life of the Church, it does. The children may view it as the end of something appealing – the start of summer vacation seems like a long time ago – and their parents may be breathing sighs of relief. For those involved in parish ministries, it might be a time when we say, “Now, it's time to work.”



Perhaps this is a time when we get back into the routine of things. However, we all know the truth – that faith and the Church are not seasonal. For that matter, stewardship is not seasonal, and it's not something that is done a few times a year. Rather, stewardship is something we should be thinking about each and every day.

There are many definitions of stewardship, but at its very basis, it means using the gifts God has given us to do the things God asks – calls, expects – us to do. Stewardship is discipleship. We may tend to think of stewardship as a question: “What is mine and what is God's?” The truth is that all that we have and all that we are belongs to and comes from God – absolutely everything!

We may hear that stewardship is using and sharing our time, our talent, and our treasure. In terms of time, the secret is not learning how to use it or how to get more of it – the secret is knowing how best to use it. Talent and treasure are given to each of us in different amounts. Nevertheless, the bottom line is that we have to trust God before we really share those things. Relying on God and living a God-cen-

tered life are fundamental to a relationship with Him – and, for that matter, with one another. Being contented is not the fulfillment of what you may want. Rather, it is the realization of what you already have.

So, we are back to the reality of this time of year. You may have heard the statement that stewardship people are grateful people. Perhaps this is a time to be grateful for the summer that has passed. But it is a time for us to recommit our-

selves to doing better, especially as we enter a time of year that provides a return to routine. Importantly, it is also a time filled with celebrations, thanksgiving, hope, and maybe even better stewardship on each of our parts.

In Christ,

*Fr. Butler*  
Fr. Butler, Pastor



## Finding Forgiveness and Love in the E

**D**o you remember that very first time you went to Confession? Perhaps you walked into the confessional trembling, nervous – would you remember all your sins? How would the priest respond? And hopefully, you walked out, minutes later, after perhaps timidly reciting from your mental list, feeling free, the weight of the world lifted from your shoulders, knowing you were truly forgiven and loved by God.

It can be easy to think of the Sacrament of Reconciliation – or Confession – as something negative, like a punishment. But nothing could be farther from the truth! Rather than an encounter with an angry judge, it's the merciful hand of God, reaching for us, in an invitation to receive His love and forgiveness.

Here at St. John the Baptist, as we prepare our second-grade children to receive this sacrament, along with their First Communion, we hope that this sentiment will be the heart of their understanding of what it means to be reconciled to God.

This past spring, Sarah Hoffman walked alongside her daughter, Emily, as she prepared to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Sarah, who grew up Catholic, was happy to be able to share this experience with her oldest child.

"I was born and raised Catholic, I made my sacraments, and I think it's important to have God and spirituality in your children's life, to pass on the Catholic faith to my children," Sarah says.

For Sarah, watching her daughter prepare for and receive her First Confession was a beautiful experience.

"I could see that she was nervous, but when she came out she had a big smile," she says. "Things just started clicking with her [in her faith], that was a change I saw in her."



*"I was born and raised Catholic, I made my sacraments and I think it's important to have God and spirituality in your children's life, to pass on the Catholic religion to my children," says Sarah Hoffman (right), whose daughter, Emily, received her First Sacraments this past spring.*

Sarah also found that going through the process of helping her daughter prepare for her First Confession helped her grow in her own faith.

"The church had a retreat for parents of children making their sacraments, and that really helped my faith and reignited the flame, so I could support my child in preparing for the sacraments," Sarah says. "It jogged my memory on things I hadn't thought about in a

*"No matter where you are or what you do, you can stop and talk to Him at any time. Going to Confession is important to clean your soul. It's one way to connect with God, to clean your conscience and your soul." — Sarah Hoffman*

# Beautiful Sacrament of Reconciliation

long time. For me, it was a good refresher, to bring me back to my faith and get me grounded again. It helped me remember why we do certain things.”

It is Sarah’s hope that the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps her daughter to remain close to God, as well as to return to Him whenever necessary.

“I hope she always remembers that God is there for her – no matter where you are or what you do, you can stop and talk to Him at any time,” she says. “Going to

Confession is important to clean your soul. It’s one way to connect with God, to clean your conscience and your soul.”

Sarah has experienced the gift of Confession in her own life and is grateful to be reminded of the blessing that it is.

“I think Confession does bring me closer to God – just knowing that the priest is there, saying you’re forgiven,” Sarah says.

*For more information on signing your child up to prepare for their First Reconciliation, please contact Director of Religious Education Carol Shelton at 815-970-1928 or [carolshelton@stjbsom.org](mailto:carolshelton@stjbsom.org).*

*If you are an adult and would like to learn more about this wonderful sacrament, please contact John and Sara Stutzman at [RCIA@stjbsom.org](mailto:RCIA@stjbsom.org).*

*We encourage and welcome all parishioners to come and receive God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, offered at St. John the Baptist on Tuesdays at 5 p.m., Saturdays at 4 p.m., or by appointment at 815-498-2010.*

## Extraordinary Ministers *continued from front cover*

Now as a fully initiated and self-proclaimed “die-hard Catholic,” Greg is grateful for the opportunity to share the greatest gift he has ever received – the gift of God Himself – with others as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

“Christ meant what He said when He said, ‘Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you shall not have life within you,’” Greg says. “It is an honor to participate in this ministry.”

And he strongly feels that it is not a ministry to be taken lightly. “When you are giving out Holy Communion, you have to be conscious that it is not bread and wine, but really the Body and Blood of Jesus,” Greg says. “You have the *Lord* in your hand. You should come to church early and prepare yourself spiritually and mentally before Mass if you are going to distribute the Eucharist.”

As Greg explains, it is a ministry that must remain true to its fundamental intentions.

“Extraordinary Ministers are called so because they are to be used in ‘extraordinary circumstances’ only,” Greg says. “At our parish, because we have so many communicants and only one priest, it is considered an ‘extraordinary’ circumstance. If there are only 10 people receiving Communion, for example, there would not be a need for Extraordinary Ministers of Communion to serve.”

Overall, Greg has been impressed with the devotion he witnesses among our parishioners, and appreciates being among such faithful Catholics.

“Almost everyone at our parish shows reverence and respect when they receive Holy Communion,” he says. “A lot of parishioners receive the Eucharist on the tongue, and some even receive kneeling.”

*If you would like more information on how to serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, please contact the parish office at 815-498-2010. To volunteer, you must be Catholic and in the state of grace.*

# St. John the Baptist

## Pope St. Pius X: A Modern Traditionalist

On Aug. 21, the Church commemorates the feast of a great saint – St. Pius X, the peasant boy who became the Vicar of Christ. St. Pius X is a wonderful saint for our times because he effectively and definitively worked for a balance between upholding the Tradition and Faith of the Church and adapting to the Modern Age.

St. Pius X – Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto – was born as one of eight children into an impoverished peasant family. He pursued God’s call on him to the priesthood from an early age. Even as a young priest, he possessed great personal and pastoral skills. In addition to his deep holiness and virtue, St. Pius had a passion for defending and preserving the truth of the faith, which he carried with him into his pontificate.

As pope, he gave as his motto: “*Instaurare Omnia in Christo*” – “to restore all things in Christ” – a mission proclaimed not a moment too soon.

Already in Europe, secular governments, social institutions, and the mass media were driving the faith out of public life and education, all the while upholding individual freedom – understood as unlimited license – as the ultimate good. Worst of all, these philosophies had made their way into the minds of many



clergy and Catholic laity, who claimed that modern science had discredited many dogmas of the Church. They proposed a new Christianity based what they called the “religious experience,” a continually changing and evolving human experience that would in turn continually transform the meaning of Catholic teachings. The problem was that the new teachings proposed by these modernists contradicted the very foundations of the faith established by Jesus Christ.

Fortunately, the Holy Father saw through the modern theories immediately and exposed the false doctrines, all the while acting with extreme discretion and pastoral charity. Pope Pius X reminded us that God, the Author of both faith and reason,

and in Whom there is no contradiction, cannot allow science and true religion to contradict. Moreover, he declared that all the essential teachings of the Catholic faith and of Scripture could be defended rationally, and he encouraged the faithful to study the faith and read the Scriptures daily.

While Pius X spent much of his pontificate defending Catholic dogma from the threat of Modernism, he recognized the need for legitimate modern reforms within the Church. For instance, he initiated the codification of Canon Law, because the laws of the Church had little organization up to that time. He reformed the administrative offices of the Church. He also reformed the Liturgical Calendar, giving precedence back to the Sunday liturgies, which were too often being trumped by celebration of the daily saint’s feast. Pius X initiated a renewal in liturgical music, as well, bringing back Gregorian chant and sacred polyphony to their primary place within the liturgy.

Two of this saint’s most noted acts are reassigning the time of First Communion of children to the age of reason (about 7 years), and of advising and promoting daily Communion, saying, “Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to Heaven.”

## Parishioner Karen Taylor

### *“Interacting With Kids Builds Our Faith”*

People are waiting for us — your friends from school, your librarian, your aunt and uncle.

That’s what Karen Taylor would tell her young children on Sunday mornings as they put on church clothes and settled into the car to drive to Mass.

“We’re one big family at St. John’s, and I want my children to feel like a part of that family at church and in the community,” Karen says. “People are waiting for us and expecting us. I want them to live that kind of involved life.”

Karen is a lifelong member of St. John the Baptist, and she and her husband, Keith, were married at the parish. In fact, Karen received all her sacraments at the church where her three children — Olivia, sixth grade; Madison, third grade; and Brayden, kindergarten — now receive theirs.

Stewardship and particularly giving to the faith formation of our youngest parishioners is an integral part of Karen’s life. She has been an aide in St. John’s Sunday school program since the early 1990s.



*The Taylor Family — Karen and Keith with their children, Olivia (back), Madison (middle right) and Brayden*

“At first, I helped a child who had disabilities and went with her to classes,” Karen says. “Then I bounced around as a teacher’s aide wherever they needed me, and then taught with another parishioner for a while.”

Though Karen has taught eighth-grade and fifth-grade faith

formation courses, today she works with our third-grade students, which is an age that she’s very passionate about.

“My classroom always has a lot going on,” Karen says. “We’re baking in the kitchen and interacting with the Internet and doing reenactments. I hope that years from

*continued on back cover*

*“All the children see what the adults do, and when they see something positive, they want to be part of it. Interacting with the kids builds our faith and their faith. It is a church-wide thing. It takes everyone, and everyone plays a part.” — Karen Taylor*



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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

## Parishioner Karen Taylor *continued from page 7*

now, they'll remember these little activities, and that will help them grow in their faith."

Through sharing the faith with our children, Karen has observed that her own faith has necessarily grown.

"My knowledge of the faith grows every week to teach them a little more," Karen says. "The planning and preparation makes me step back and do more research into Bible stories and teachings."

Though Karen has set aside these mornings to be involved with Sunday school, she emphasizes that people can give back of whatever time they have.

"You don't have to make a big commitment to get involved," Karen says. "If you've traveled to some place or have had some particular experience, come share it with the kids on Sunday. Give whenever you can."

Today, Karen's oldest daughter serves as an altar server. Giving back has changed Olivia's experience of the Mass and brought her deeper into the community.

"Being an altar server has shown her how she doesn't just have to sit there and listen during Mass," Karen says. "There are things to do. You can be involved and more around. She's excited and wants to be a part of the community."

Karen is grateful for all the faith community members who have played a part in her children's lives over the years.

"All the children see what the adults do, and when they see something positive, they want to be part of it," Karen says. "Interacting with the kids builds our faith and their faith. It is a church-wide thing. It takes everyone, and everyone plays a part."