



St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Symbolon Program Leads Parishioners to Deeper Faith

Since *Symbolon* arrived here at St. John the Baptist, it's been an impactful two years – and as we approach the third, it's only going to get better!

The *Symbolon* program, organized here in January 2015, is still going strong as it helps participants grow their Catholic faith into fully living in Christ.

Sara and John Stutzman introduced the program to our parish not only as a way to help us learn more about our Catholic faith, but also to help us put our faith into action in our daily lives.

There were 50 participants in the first year of the program, and they were divided into three discussion groups.

"Today, we're at the same number, but all are not with *Symbolon*," Sara says. "The website, FORMED.org, that *Symbolon* comes from, has expanded, and we did, as well. We are offering different topics to small groups and we do still have *Symbolon* going, and we still have about the same number at 50. Specifically for *Symbolon*, which my husband and I teach, the group numbers about 12."

The *Symbolon* program has been divided into two segments of 10 sessions each. *Symbolon I* is "Knowing the Faith," and it covers the Trinity, the Creed, and "Who is Jesus?" The second segment, *Symbolon II* is "Living the Faith," and it takes the same topics, but directs the conversation into how these elements become part of our every-



(From left) Judy Kreczmer and Sara Stutzman. Judy facilitates the other study groups offered in our parish, and Sara and her husband, John, facilitate Symbolon.

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Symbolon Program *continued from front cover*

day life. *Symbolon I* was held during the first half of the year, while *Symbolon II* has just ended.

The *Symbolon* group meets between the 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Sunday Masses, a time that allows parents with children in the Religious Education classes to attend. The format calls for an opening with prayer, and a brief review of the meeting topic. Then the group views the DVD program for the day, a process that takes about 25 minutes.

“I’d say the DVD is really the highlight and is the best-produced part of the program,” Sara says. “There are beautiful settings that take you to the old churches in Rome. It covers the history of the churches, with mentions of the topic. So, if the topic is Baptism, the video will go to the beautiful Baptism fonts in the old churches in Rome and around the world. The talks on the video are excellent. They’re a pretty great combination of learning facts and being a discussion jump-starter — how do we apply this to our daily lives?”

During the sessions, the participants use the study guides provided, but the discussions often go beyond the questions raised in the guides.

“We get into really excellent discussions,” Sara says. “Real-life examples come into our topics and current events come in.”

One of the best results coming from the *Symbolon* groups is that Catholics from all walks of life are sharing their experiences and faith lives.



“We have older Catholics who have lots to contribute because they’ve lived faithful Catholic lives through all kinds of ups and downs of life,” Sara says. “They find that they are never too old to learn. We have received feedback from older Catholics that they understand their faith better. We have people who are at the point in their lives when their faith is coming to life and taking on more growth. They are at the point where they are making changes in their lives about how they are looking at the world and applying their Catholic faith in a new way.”

There is currently an overlap with the RCIA process, with some of the candidates attending the *Symbolon* classes. Once the *Symbolon* classes end, the candidates will then focus on the RCIA process.

“It’s kind of interesting,” Sara says. “No matter where they are in their faith journey, it seems to trigger new growth.

“Personally, it’s been very satisfying to continually go over the basics of our faith, and see how it’s not just book learning,” Sara adds. “By going over the basics, you realize the basics are our foundation — the Sacraments, the Creed — they are so important and never get old. It continually opens the eyes of all of us about how we can live our lives better following Jesus.”

“We have people who are at the point in their lives when their faith is coming to life and taking on more growth. They are at the point where they are making changes in their lives about how they are looking at the world and applying their Catholic faith in a new way.” — Sara Stutzman

*Interested in taking part in Symbolon?
Call the parish office at 815-498-2010.*

A Letter From Our Pastor

Reflections at the End of the Year

Dear Parishioners,

It seems as if we just finished Lent and Easter, and here we are at Advent and Christmas. To say this is a busy month for many is an understatement. Although December is a month of love, it can also be a difficult month for some. For those with families, it may be a month of travel as people rush to be united with loved ones, sometimes after a long period of separation.

There is no shortage of reminders as to what time of year this is. However, for us as Catholics, we may need to refocus to see where we are in our faith lives. Were you aware that for us, December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception? In that regard, we celebrate a Holy Day of Obligation on Friday, Dec. 8. Advent begins on Dec. 3, and you may notice that we begin to wear purple as a sign of Advent. That color changes to white or gold beginning at Christmas.

Of course, this is also the last month of the regular calendar year, which may add additional tasks to our own schedules as we finalize things for the end of the year. However, there are many opportunities for us during this month to share, to pray and to celebrate in a Christian way, and I would encourage you to make an effort to be part of these. Right here in our parish, much is happening along those



lines, and a careful reading of the bulletin will alert you to the “when, where and what” of these upcoming opportunities.

As I indicated earlier, this can also be a difficult time for some. In the midst of our own celebrations and joy, we need to be aware of that reality and of those living with it. This is a time to reach out, and it is a time to show love.

This December, let our minds be focused on Christ, Who will be born for us at Christmas, and for Whose coming we must always be prepared throughout the year. This is a time to thank God and to pray. It is a time to reach out to love and live peacefully with one another. We need to remember that life continues after December, in spite of everything we feel we need to get done.

My prayers and blessings go out to each of you and your families. May God continue to watch over you. May the year 2017 end well for all of us!

In Christ,

Fr. Butler
Fr. Butler, Pastor

St. John the Baptist

Dave Frieders Reflects on Life, Faith, a



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— Dave Frieders

Here at St. John the Baptist, we are blessed to have many parishioners who exemplify what it means to remain steadfast in the faith, even in the midst of personal pain and struggle. While Dave Frieders found himself drifting away from the Church as a young man, he is thankful today that he eventually found his way back to the faith – a faith that is now sustaining him in a time of struggle.

Dave grew up in a devoutly Catholic home in Aurora, attending Catholic grade school and then Marmion Academy. During his high school years, he found himself beginning to drift away from the Catholic faith. He remembers being teased by the other teenagers in his neighborhood for attending a military school, and at the same time, he didn't seem to fit in with the students at Marmion who aspired to become doctors or other professionals, while he had no idea what his own future might hold.

Although he felt out of place in his high school, Dave found an ally in his first-year religion teacher. In that class, Dave first fell in love with the Christian writers that would later play an instrumental role in his own faith life – G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Thomas Merton. At the encouragement of his guidance counselor, Dave headed to seminary after his graduation, but only stayed for one semester.

In the 1960s, if a young person felt directionless, often they would fall in with some questionable crowds. As Dave became involved in the folk music and coffee shop scene, he found himself surrounded by a heavy drinking and drug culture. Dave eventually abandoned the English degree he was pursuing at St. Procopius College to work as a truck driver and run a coffee shop.

Through it all, Dave's father never lost hope that his son would one day find his way back to the faith.

and Finding Blessings in Times of Trial

“During that time, my dad knew something was wrong and talked to me a couple of times,” Dave recalls. “He said, ‘Promise me one thing – no matter what you do, before you go to bed, say a Hail Mary. That is what I do.’ I loved my parents and brother and sisters even though I didn’t follow the same path that they did. So I always said to my dad, ‘I will.’”

After becoming an avid listener of a folk music radio program in 1964, Dave finally felt he had found a calling and immediately enrolled in the Department of Defense Information School with the goal of working in radio broadcast. The program took him to New York, where he learned print journalism as well as radio work, before his first assignment sent him to Texas to work on the Fort Sam Houston newspaper. A year later, he was thrilled to be transferred to radio work in Korea.

Living abroad, Dave continued to find himself with the “wrong crowd.” Still, the words of his father were never far from his mind.

“I had kept my promise to my dad to say the Hail Mary every night before I went to bed, and that was the extent of my faith at that time,” he says. “But there was a priest there that we used to do a benefit for. Fr. Charlie ran a Korean orphanage and we used to raise money for him through the radio station. I thought what he was doing was great, and it got me kind of interested in the faith again.”

Following one more stateside assignment, Dave left the service and headed back to Illinois. Soon he found himself returning to the authors he had so loved reading in his religion class at Marmion Academy – Chesterton, Lewis, Tolkien, and Merton. Through the pages of these books – by now treasured companions – Dave found his way back to the Church.

Dave met his wife, Joan, through a coworker, and the two were married at St. Paul’s Catholic

Church in Sandwich and began attending daily Mass. When they moved to Somonauk in 1973, they became parishioners here at St. John the Baptist and immediately got involved in parish life.

“When I got started going back to church, I just felt really good about it,” Dave explains. “It felt like I had arrived back home again. I got a lot out of it and was very active, singing in the choir and cantoring. We have been very happy here at St. John the Baptist.”

Their strong faith life has certainly helped the Frieders in times of trouble. In the 1980s, Joan had to leave her career as a nurse due to multiple sclerosis, and just four years ago, Dave was diagnosed with blood cancer. Dave has experienced years of chronic pain and a suppressed immune system resulting from a stem cell transplant, preventing him from being able to attend a crowded Mass or sit on a pew without his special cushions.

Through their trials, both Dave and Joan have remained grateful for their blessings.

“We’re limited in what we can do, but fortunate to do what we can,” Dave says. “I’m very happy when I can get to adoration or daily Mass. And I’m blessed to have the wonderful wife that I have – I just can’t say enough about my wife and daughters and granddaughters!”

Knowing what it is like to have drifted from the faith for some years, Dave is particularly thankful today for the solace he finds in his faith and in his parish.

“As Father says, we can always offer our struggles up – all the suffering we have – and at least be helpful in that way,” he affirms. “And we’ve met others who also have struggles, so we have met some very nice people who have helped us out in the faith – especially those who bring us Communion on Sundays. Things are rather difficult, but at the same time, we are still grateful to be where we are.”

St. John the Baptist

Stewardship and Hospitality for the Advent and Christmas Seasons

It's the Advent and Christmas season. You've extended invitations, planned the menu, and decorated your home. You are ready to be hospitable. But what does it really mean to live the stewardship of hospitality?

The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 4: 8-11, "Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God; whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever."

When we read Peter's words, we see that hospitality is more than good manners. We see that hospitality is part of what it means to be a faithful steward. So, during the hustle and bustle of Advent and Christmas, how can we be hospitable?

Open your home to strangers. The holidays can be an especially painful time for people. This year, do something about it. If you're already expecting strangers, wel-

come them warmly. Decide ahead of time that showing love is more important than passing judgment.

Be truly cheerful. When you open your home for the holidays, you may be a happy host, but are you a cheerful one? Believe it or not, there's a difference. A happy person feels happiness. A cheerful person causes happiness.

Use your gifts to serve. Hosting and serving go together. You bake the turkey, pour the drinks, and slice the pie. To some degree, this is expected and normal. What's not normal is for a host to truly serve – to look for the needs in others and the gifts in themselves and find even a small way to help.

Give God glory. When family, friends and strangers enter your home, it's an opportunity for them to see Christ in you. You never know what's going on behind the scenes in people's lives or how much an encounter like this might mean to them. So, when you welcome and serve your guests, remember that your ultimate goal is to give God glory.

Advent and Christmas give us the opportunity to reflect on Jesus' call to live as stewards and disciples of His Word – and through hospitality, we can live that calling.

Advent and Christmas Schedule

Advent Penance Service, Dec. 18, 7 p.m.

Additional Confession times:

Tuesday, Dec. 19, 4 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 22, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 23, 9 a.m.

*Christmas Eve Mass times: Sunday, Dec. 24
4 and 11 p.m.*

*Christmas Day Mass time: Monday, Dec. 25
10 a.m.*

Eucharistic Adoration:

Friday, Dec. 8 — 8 a.m.-6:40 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 15 — 7:30 a.m.-9 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 22 — 7:30 a.m.-9 p.m.

*Christmas Carols sung before 11 p.m. Mass
on Dec. 24 at 10:30 p.m.*

Anointing of the Sick

A Sacrament of Hope and Comfort

Unlike sacraments such as First Holy Communion and Matrimony, which are often highly anticipated, Anointing of the Sick tends to be one from which we Catholics shy away. Associated with times of sorrow and death, we push it away from our minds as a reminder of our imminent mortality. Yet, rather than being a beacon of doom, this Sacrament of Healing is in fact one of hope and comfort — one that strengthens a person during times of suffering, grants them courage during their final hours and, most importantly, unites the sick person to Christ as they prepare for eternal life.

This is why Pope Francis stressed during a 2014 General Audience that we should never avoid or view it as “bad luck” to call a priest when someone we love is sick or suffering. For, says the Holy Father, the priest comes to “help the sick or elderly person,” bringing with him hope, help, and the forgiveness of sins. It reminds the recipient that they are being supported by the entire Church family. And most importantly of all, it draws the person closer to our merciful Lord.

“It is the Lord Jesus Himself Who makes Himself present in the sacrament, Who takes us by the hand, Who caresses us as He did with the sick, and Who reminds us that we already belong to Him

and that nothing — not even evil and death — can ever separate us from Him,” Pope Francis said.

Parishioner Laura Grubb witnessed personally the truth of these words when her mother, Patty Donahue, received the

sacrament shortly before her passing. Almost instantly after Fr. Butler’s entrance into the room, says Laura, the entire family felt more at peace. It was as if they could feel the very presence of Christ in the room.

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“It was truly a special few moments. I just had an overwhelming feeling that my mom understood the importance of the sacrament and that she heard Father in her heart. In fact, when I told my mom that Fr. Butler was here, she opened her eyes briefly and looked up at him — something she hadn’t done in two or three days.” — Laura Grubb





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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

Anointing of the Sick *continued from page 7*

“It was truly a special few moments,” Laura says. “I just had an overwhelming feeling that my mom understood the importance of the sacrament and that she heard Father in her heart. In fact, when I told my mom that Fr. Butler was here, she opened her eyes briefly and looked up at him – something she hadn’t done in two or three days.”

Yet, while Anointing of the Sick is often received during a person’s final days, as in the case of Patty, it is not exclusively for such times. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that this sacrament is for any person experiencing “grave illness,” meaning that any member of the

Church who is in danger of death from sickness or old age should receive the sacrament in order to benefit from its healing graces (1514, 1515). People can also receive the sacrament more than once, much like the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

Though death is never easy, Anointing of the Sick removes its sting by reminding us of the hope of the Resurrection and, in the words of Pope Francis, by “allow[ing] us to touch God’s compassion for man.” Let us be vigilant in seeking out the graces of this sacrament, both for ourselves and our loved ones.

*To learn more about Anointing of the Sick or to schedule its reception,
please contact the parish office at 815-498-2010.*