



St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

In this Issue:

- 3 A New Year, New Challenges, New Opportunities
- 4 Finding a Home in Rome: Meet Seminarian Jack Reichardt
- 6 Teaching Children to Live a Life of Stewardship
- 7 “Of Great Value to a Parish Operation”
The St. John the Baptist Catholic Church Finance Council

Broadening Our Experience of the Church Beyond Our Parish Boundaries

Derived from the Latin word *peregrinum*, the word “pilgrim” is meant to convey the idea of wandering over a great distance. Yet, this isn’t an aimless wandering, but rather one with a purpose toward God. And this is precisely what the spiritual life is all about – us wandering through our temporal life, striving to obtain holiness so that we can return home to Paradise. Seeking to physically emulate this concept, Catholics have long traveled to holy places around the world, hoping to further encounter and experience God.

“When you travel to a holy place as a pilgrim, you have a mindset that you want to become more Christ-like and to do what God wants,” says Parish Life Coordinator Denise Ramos. “That really pervades the whole experience,



The Cathedral of St. Peter in Rockford, Ill.

and I think it really strengthens your relationship with Him.”

Throughout her life, Denise has been blessed to go on many pilgrimages, both locally and around the world. She’s visited the famous Notre Dame Cathedral and made a trip to the Vatican that will forever remain in her memory.

continued on page 2

Broadening Our Experience of the Church Beyond Our Parish Boundaries *continued from front cover*

“One of the best experiences that I’ve ever had was attending Palm Sunday Mass in St. Peter’s Square,” Denise says. “It was the year before John Paul II passed away. To this day, every time I think about that experience, I get all choked up. It was just so anointed with the Holy Spirit – one of those moments in time that I treasure and would love to go back to.”

Seeking to provide a similar experience for those who may not have the means or ability to travel outside of the country, the Parish Life Ministry has begun coordinating periodic local pilgrimages. Most recently, parishioners were able to visit four local churches on Oct. 27, passing through designated Holy Doors of Mercy for the diocese of Rockford.

“We wanted to help parishioners utilize this unique opportunity during the Year of Mercy,” Denise says. “The door symbolizes a passage or transition into a special year of evangelization and prayer – it evokes the concept of forgiveness, which is always the main focus of a Holy Year.”

During the Holy Door Pilgrimage, parishioners were able to prayerfully pass through the Holy Doors at St. Mary Church in DeKalb, the Cathedral of St. Peter in Rockford, the Poor Clares Corpus Christi Monastery in Rockford, and St. Michael’s in Galena. Then, later, they fulfilled the requirements for a plenary indulgence by worthily receiving Holy Communion, going to Confession, and praying for the Holy Father’s intentions.

In the process, parishioners were also able to learn more about the Catholic faith, to revel in the beauty of the universal Church, and to personally experience God’s mercy. For some, perhaps it was even an avenue for dreams coming true, says Denise, who partially attributes her pilgrimage experience to the Chicago Cubs’ victory at the World Series.

“We were able to take home with us Holy Water from the Poor Clare’s monastery, which I did,” Denise says. “The next day, I went to Wrigley Field and put

some of it on the field, and the Chicago Cubs went on to win the World Series.”

Although every pilgrimage may not ensure your favorite baseball team’s success, each pilgrimage remains a unique way for us to physically represent our ongoing journey toward heaven. It is way for us to set aside the cares of daily living, and to focus our minds and hearts on the true meaning of life – a way, says Denise, “to broaden our experience of Church beyond our parish boundaries.”

Though the Jubilee Year of Mercy has come to an end, closing the Holy Doors of Mercy, the Parish Life Ministry plans to host future pilgrimages. In fact, during Holy Week Denise hopes to take a group to the Shrine of Christ’s Passion in St. John, Indiana, allowing parishioners to reflect upon and more deeply enter into Christ’s passion, death and resurrection.



Local pilgrimages, such as the recent visit to the Holy Doors, help remind us we do not need to travel across the world to experience God’s peace and mercy.

If you would like to learn more about future pilgrimages or to become involved with the Parish Life Ministry, please contact Denise Ramos at 815-498-9163 or zwirbs_denise@yahoo.com.

A Letter From Our Pastor

A New Year, New Challenges, New Opportunities

Dear Parishioners,

It is a new year, and it is my prayer for all of you – and for me, as well – that we can take new steps on our faith journeys, and seek new ways to live out discipleship and stewardship.

Pope Francis once commented on his perspective of our modern approach to life. He said, “Certainly, possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want more, never satisfied. I have learned that the most important thing is to put on Christ in your life, place your trust in Him, and you will never be disappointed.”

The pope has been called “the world’s parish priest.” As we pray for one another in this New Year, may we all ask the Lord to help us appreciate Pope Francis’ approach to life, his simple way of seeing things, and his very basic way of appreciating things. I would hope that we see this year as a time for opportunity, a time to deepen our relationship to Christ, and for that matter to one another.

If we really wish to change our lives and the lives of others, there are two easy ways to do it. We are blessed with many opportunities in this parish to pray, but as much as it is important for us to take advantage of those, we also need to develop a strong



personal prayer life. Recall young Samuel, who was not quite sure what to do with his life, or what direction to go. When he finally settled on that one important prayer, “Speak, Lord, for I am listening,” Samuel gave us the hint as to what we need to do. Prayer is a two-way street, and part of that is taking the time to listen to God.

The second important way is to be joyful. Christ certainly called us to do that. Pope Francis has had much to say about joy, as well. The Holy Father says, “Joy cannot be held at heel; it must be let go. Joy is a pilgrim virtue. It is a gift that walks – walks on the path of life, that walks with Jesus... proclaiming joy, lengthens and widens that path.” We must seek that joy and then we need to share it. That is truly our call. When we so readily share our joy, it translates quite easily into “love your neighbor.”

Yes, there may be challenges ahead in 2017, but we must focus on the opportunities, and then exert the effort to benefit from those opportunities. Happy New Year!

In Christ,

Fr. Butler

Fr. Butler, Pastor

Finding a Home Meet Seminarian

As seminarian Jack Reichardt sets out on the 40-minute walk to class each morning, he marvels anew at his surroundings, knowing that he could never ask for a more inspiring setting for his theological studies. For there, practically on his doorstep, lies the very heart of our Church – St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican. Five months into his studies at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, Jack is still awed by his proximity to the Holy Father and the home of the Church.

“It’s taking awhile to sink in how close I am to the Vatican,” Jack says. “Just walking past the square – knowing that it’s not my final destination and that I’m on my way to the grocery store or something – I have to stop and sit down and stare for awhile. And being so close to the pope and hearing him every Sunday – the raw power that the Church has is at our fingertips here.”

Although today it is clear that all roads were leading to Rome throughout Jack’s life, Jack himself had never really considered entering the priesthood before his freshman year of college. Looking back now, he can see how the seeds of faith were being planted and cultivated in his childhood. Jack’s parents raised him and his two younger siblings in a loving, Catholic home, where prayer before meals and weekly Mass attendance at Holy Family Church in Rockford were the norm. His four years at Boylan Catholic High School also helped to form Jack in the faith. And yet, as he arrived for his first year at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota in 2012, a vocation to the priesthood was far from his mind.

Then one day, while Jack was sitting in Mass – only somewhat paying attention to the homily – things suddenly changed.

“My fall semester of freshman year of college, I remember sitting in Mass kind of daydreaming,” he recalls. “One moment I was daydreaming, and the next moment I was hit by it. It was like I was a damp



Jack Reichardt at his candidacy ceremony with his parents, Mark and Debbie, and Bishop David J. Malloy

piece of wood lit by a match that had just burst into flames. I knew just beyond a doubt that I had to become a priest.

“I went up to the priest right after Mass and said, ‘I think I’m called to the priesthood,’” Jack continues. “And the priest asked how long I had been thinking about this and when I told him it was about 30 minutes, he said ‘OK, take some time with this.’ And he laid out a toolkit for me – daily Mass, reading the lives of the saints, attending Holy Hour, saying the Rosary, spending time in prayer. And my faith life skyrocketed. Before that I had been living the free college life, and then you just see the raw power the faith can have over you and your soul.”

Only months later, in January 2013, Jack felt God confirming his call, and got in touch with the vocations director for the Diocese of Rockford. He was accepted as a seminarian at St. John Vianney College Seminary just two months later.

Although Jack had never expected to pursue a vocation to the priesthood, all of that changed forever once he heard the call. Now well on his way to becoming a priest, he likens his experience to the moment of St. Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus.

Home in Rome:

with Jack Reichardt

“One of my philosophy [professors] once talked about how some people are like St. Paul getting knocked off the horse – there was never any doubt they were called – while others have to struggle and pray about it, and others are in the dark,” Jack explains. “And I kind of align myself with the first one – knocked off the horse and never having doubt or fear about it.”

During his years of philosophy study in minor seminary, Jack’s steadfast belief that he was in the right place continued to grow as he developed friendships with fellow seminarians and found a valuable spiritual mentor in one of the campus priests. Since Jack hadn’t previously known any priests on a personal level, these experiences were extremely valuable in showing him that he was not alone in answering the call.

“I became amazing friends [with some of the seminarians],” he says. “We’d go to the Mississippi River and have a bonfire and talk about life. Once I started getting to know the guys, I began feeling at home. It was comforting.”

Now that Jack has started his theology studies – major seminary – Rome will be his home for the next few years. He is certainly not alone here, either – the Pontifical North American College houses over 200 seminarians from around the United States, Canada and Australia! Each seminarian takes classes at one of several institutes in Rome. At the Gregorian University, where Jack is studying theology, all classes are taught in Italian. While learning and studying in a foreign language has been a leap of faith for Jack, it has also been a wonderful reminder of the Church’s universality.

“Italian is the common language for all the students at the university,” he explains. “The other day, I sat between a sister from Korea and another from Slovakia. And one guy I was talking to in my class had been hit by an IED in Afghanistan. The universality of the church just kind of hits you in the head. The NAC [Pontifical North American College] was given by a

pope to America about 100 years ago to send Americans here to study and get that universal understanding of the Church – to be inebriated with it and then bring that gift back to the States.”

Jack looks forward to a time when he will be able to bring all of the gifts and lessons he has received in seminary back to the Diocese of Rockford as an ordained priest. He has a strong interest in teaching and would greatly enjoy a role as a religion and theology teacher. But most of all, he hopes to serve the people of God in a meaningful way and looks forward to offering Masses, visiting the sick, and giving parishioners an open ear and shoulder to lean on in their times of need.

In the meantime, Jack is enjoying the fruitful experience of all that attending seminary in the heart of Rome has to offer him.

“Sundays are our days off, and I often will hop on my bike and go check out a new church and go to Mass there that day,” he says. “I’ll get a coffee and cornetto [pastry] with a friend, just explore the piazzas, or check out a pizza place on a Friday night. It still hits me how close I am to the center of the Church here. To see the men here and the vitality and spirituality in the Church is so inspiring!”



(From left) Nick Sentovich (seminarian, Theology 2, Diocese of Rockford), Msgr. William McDonnell (priest of Diocese of Rockford, retired, on the faculty at Pontifical North American College), and Jack Reichardt (seminarian, Theology 1, Rockford) in St. Peter’s Square

St. John the Baptist

Teaching Children to Live a Life of Stewardship

How old do you have to be to practice stewardship? Can a 5-year-old embrace stewardship? How about a 10-year-old?

Although there is no guideline to what the right age is to begin to live a life of stewardship, God's call certainly extends to each of His children – even the young ones.

It is especially important to show children that they are not too young to share their time, talent and treasure to help build God's kingdom.

Sharing Your Time

A young child can share of his time in a variety of ways appropriate to his ability. For example, during the day, a child can pray for a loved one that is hurt, or say prayers with his parents or siblings. He can participate in Mass each Sunday, and even take time from his day to thank God for a veteran who has served our country.

Spending time being virtuous – such as being patient, generous and kind – is also a great example of sharing our time for love of God.

Sharing Your Talent

Using God-given talents to glorify God can also be performed by both young and old. An elementary school-aged child can easily clean her room or perform chores such as raking leaves, doing laundry, or taking care of pets. Making cards for people who are sick or who have had a death in the family are other concrete examples of being a faithful steward.

Even using our talents – such as playing a musical instrument or football – to the best of our abilities to give God glory is an example of being a good steward.

Sharing Your Treasure

Although children do not have the same type of treasure to share as adults, instilling the importance of sharing finances is an important lesson.



If a child receives an allowance, he can return a portion of it to the Church in the collection basket. If he gets money for his birthday, he can give a small portion of it back to God in thanksgiving. Little ones can even share things like their Halloween candy with their siblings or friends as a way of demonstrating generosity.

The Most Important Lesson

Above all, the most important lesson to teach our children is why we share. We don't share because we "have to." We don't share because our parents tell us to. We share our time, talent and treasure with God because we are thankful for the blessings He has given us and we want to thank Him for His generosity.

Teaching these lessons at a young age will allow a lifetime of good stewardship to follow for even the youngest of God's children.

“Of Great Value to a Parish Operation”

The St. John the Baptist Catholic Church Finance Council

Under the Catholic *Code of Canon Law*, a Parish Finance Council is mandated. Specifically, it states, “In each parish there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop and in which the Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish without prejudice to the prescript of *Canon 532*.” (*Code of Canon Law*, 537). In turn, *Canon 532* states clearly that the pastor is the responsible party – decision making is his, with the advice of lay boards like the Finance Council.

The current Chair of the Finance Council is Rick Ramos. Our St. John the Baptist Finance Council consists of seven lay people – five men and two women – who are appointed by Pastor Fr. Kevin Butler. Diocese guidelines set the membership at between five and nine lay members who serve for a three year appointment that is renewable. Parish Bookkeeper Chuck Durancik, while not an “official” member of the Finance Council, works closely with the Council and attends all of the meetings.

“Our parish Finance Council advises the pastor regarding the management of parish finances and property,” Chuck says. “In addition, the Council reviews parish business operations, prepares budgets, monitors budgets and accounts throughout the year, and identifies needs and expenses for facility maintenance. We meet at least quarterly and more frequently such as when preparing the budget. As a result, we tend to meet about six times a year.”

As Chuck notes, Father is the final word on all financial matters.

“But he does consult carefully with the Council, which represents the people of the parish, and he tends to consider their advice and recommendations quite conscientiously,” he says. “The Council is made up of parishioners who have a background in financial matters and understand them thoroughly. They have



the interests of the parish and its members very much at heart. Currently, our members really touch a cross section of the parish and varied backgrounds, including education, small business, corporate business, banking, and insurance, all areas that are of great value to a parish operation.”

“The parish Finance Council really looks carefully at the pastoral direction of the parish from a financial perspective,” Chuck continues. “The people on it are invaluable in their willingness to give of themselves as good stewards of their talents and experience.”

The issue of financial transparency – that is, making sure parishioners are well aware of financial issues and decisions – is of great importance to the Finance Council.

“I do see the Council as a great example of stewardship,” Chuck says. “I know on their part, it is a way for them to use their God-given talents and experience to serve God and the parish. There are so many ways people can share and give back, and that is what stewardship is all about.”

If someone is interested in serving on the Finance Council, they should contact Fr. Butler or the parish office to indicate that interest. Parishioners can

continued on back cover



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Somonauk, IL
60552
Permit No. 25

320 S. Depot Street
PO Box 276
Somonauk, IL 60552
Phone: 815-498-2010
www.stjbsom.org

Return Service Requested

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-7:00 PM with
Benediction 7:00 PM

“Of Great Value to a Parish Operation” *continued from page 7*

also note their interest at the time of the annual stewardship renewal. However, expressed interest does not guarantee membership – those interested are interviewed and their qualifications are considered.

“We really need to stress the importance of interested members having some background and experience in financial matters,” Chuck says. “That is sort of the one requirement for membership.”

If you would like more information about our St. John the Baptist Finance Council, please contact the parish office at 815-498-2010.

“I do see the Council as a great example of stewardship. I know on their part, it is a way for them to use their God-given talents and experience to serve God and the parish. There are so many ways people can share and give back, and that is what stewardship is all about.”

— Chuck Durancik, Parish Bookkeeper
