



# St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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## The New Year at St. John the Baptist "Giving and Joy are Correlated"

**T**his is the season to examine ourselves and craft goals for the New Year! As we consider our aspirations, perhaps related to health, our families or our personal projects, let us prayerfully discern what our "stewardship resolution" will be.

"Giving and joy are correlated," Fr. Kevin Butler says. "There is a whole other way of living life when we are giving of ourselves, for there is a great joy connected to that."

We have had a full year here at St. John the Baptist, and as we look to the future, Fr. Butler hopes our parish community will continue to grow in its devotion to Mary and its opportunities for evangelization.

Last year, we began a new tradition with our celebration of the 100th anniversary of Fatima with Marian Processions.

"We will continue to do a procession with Our Lady of Fatima in the neighborhood, and I believe many blessings will come from this," says Fr. Butler. "One of the parish's focuses since I've been here has been Mary, and more and more parishioners are consecrating their hearts to her."

Many of our parish's goals are also related to evangelization and both enriching the faith of adult parishioners through programs like *Symbolon*, as well as forming our young people.



*The St. John the Baptist community celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Fatima with our Marian Processions*

*continued on back cover*

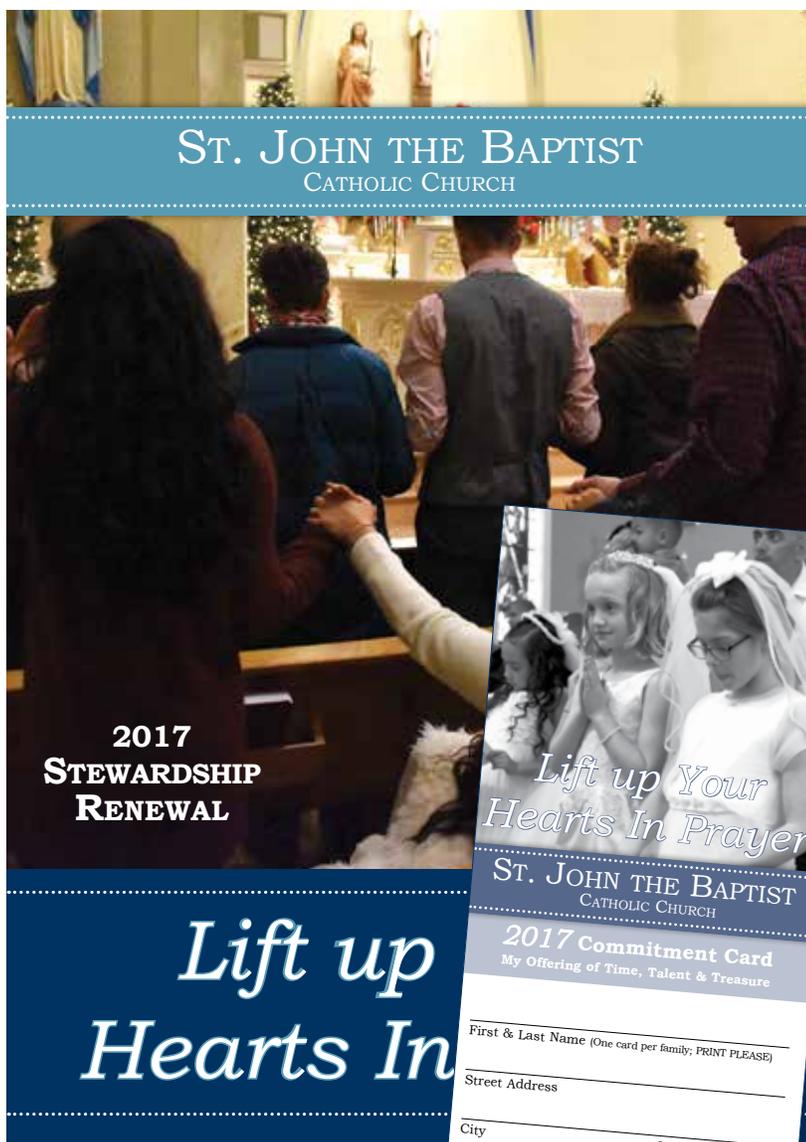
# St. John the Baptist

## The Results of Our 2017 Stewardship Renewal

This past autumn, our St. John the Baptist community participated in the 2017 Stewardship Renewal. The results of this renewal demonstrate that the stewardship way of life continues to grow within our parish community. This month, we are happy to share with you the results of the 2017 Stewardship Renewal, and how our St. John the Baptist community made commitments – or re-commitments – to sharing of their time, talent, and treasure.

- The parish received 134 Commitment Cards – this was a return rate of 44 percent from active households.
- There were 657 commitments to prayer – the Stewardship of Time – from 93 percent of participating households.
- The top three prayer commitments were: Attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days, 121; Pray for the sick of our parish, 104; Spend at least 15 minutes a day in personal prayer, 102.
- There were 532 ministry commitments, and 456 re-commitments to ministries – the Stewardship of Talent. Approximately 82 percent of participating households made a commitment to ministry.
- The top three ministry commitments were: Funeral Lunch, 62; Adoration, 54; Corned Beef Dinner, 38.
- There were 105 offertory commitments – the Stewardship of Treasure – from 78 percent of participating households. The average pledge was \$1,425.

We thank all those who participated in the 2017 Stewardship Renewal. If you did not return a Commitment Card, we still encourage you to think of ways you can share your gifts of time, talent, and treasure with God and with our St. John the Baptist community. Each parishioner is an important part of the parish family, and each of us can impact our communities, within the parish and beyond. How will you share your gifts?



**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**2017  
STEWARDSHIP  
RENEWAL**

*Lift up Your  
Hearts In*



*Lift up Your  
Hearts In Prayer*

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**2017 Commitment Card**  
My Offering of Time, Talent & Treasure

First & Last Name (One card per family; PRINT PLEASE)

Street Address

City State ZIP

Telephone (with area code)

Email

A Letter From Our Pastor

## Resolve to Give Back to God in 2018

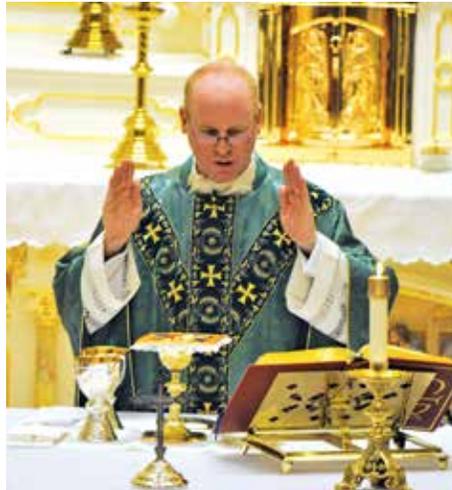
Dear Parishioners,

Another new year – 2018! There was a time in my life when this date (and others) seemed so far in the future. It is amazing how those dates start to pile up and stream by, isn't it? I have reached a point where measuring one's life by the years and dates is not as significant as many other things.

I recall reading somewhere, "The world around us asks, 'What does a person own?' But God asks, 'How does a person use what he or she has been given?'" This month of January is one filled with reminders of holiness – the official end of the Christmas season; the Epiphany of our Lord; the Baptism of the Lord; and the return to Ordinary Time, which, as we know, is not "ordinary" at all.

At Epiphany we hear, "Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts" (Matthew 2:11), a reference to the Magi and their visit to the Christ Child. The image of the Magi kneeling before the infant Jesus and opening their gifts for Him is one we should all try to follow. Each of us is called to open our gifts before Jesus and offer Him what He needs. I heard a suggestion once that if you have a problem with this thought, you should perhaps keep one of the Magi from your Christmas Nativity set and place it on your desk as a reminder.

During the Baptism of the Lord, God makes it clear when He proclaims from the Heavens, "You



are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). God has given us the greatest gift He could give. He gave His only Son. When we think about the enormity of that gift of Jesus sent to save us, in addition to all the other blessings which God has entrusted to us, it is very humbling. God has given us so much. What do we give in return?

Making resolutions is common at this time of year. We will also hear this month about how Jesus called the first apostles. The Lord

calls us as well to follow Him. Let us resolve to try to do that better – all of us. That does not mean we have to leave our work and our families behind, but we do need to put our service to Jesus. That should be our top resolution.

In *The Theology of the Hammer*, Habitat for Humanity co-founder Millard Fuller wrote, "The only truly safe investment one can make in life is what is given away." First and foremost, God wants us. That should be our real resolution – to give ourselves to the Lord. May we all do a better job of that in 2018. God bless you all.

In Christ,

*Fr. Butler*

Fr. Butler, Pastor

2018  
New Year Resolutions

# St. John the Baptist

## Following Her Mother's Footsteps: *Meet Judy*

**F**rom making the faith an important part of her life as a child, to eventually being the reason she became involved at St. John the Baptist, parishioner Judy Kreczmer's parents had a significant impact on her relationship with God.

"My roots were at church — my mom was part of the Ladies' Sodality and my father was part of the Holy Name Society," says Judy of her childhood growing up on the south side of Chicago. "We lived across the alley from the church. We did all these things growing up, and as you get older, things change, but you keep getting pulled back, because that's the way you grew up."

When she moved to the area in 2011 to care for her aging mother, Judy found herself at St. John the Baptist due to her mother's involvement.

"This was her parish for 47 years," says Judy, who had come from a sizeable church. "I thought, 'I can't move her, this is where she wants to be.' During that time, I fell in love with the people at St. John the Baptist, the pastors, everything that was going on in the parish and went



*"Sometimes you find yourself doing things you never expected you'd do, but you truly love. Be careful about what you say you'll never do! God has a really good sense of humor. Just go and see what it's about."* — Judy Kreczmer

back to doing ministries at the church."

But for a number of years when she first joined, Judy's involvement was somewhat limited, due to caring for her mother and husband, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease.

However, near the end of her mother's life, Judy's faith began

to deepen in ways she hadn't expected, in ways that would come to sustain her through the loss of both her husband and mother, in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

"When Fr. Butler came and consecrated our church to the Blessed Mother, he introduced us to *33 Days to Morning Glory*," Judy says. "I started doing

# Judy Kreczmer

that and my mom wanted to do it too. So, every morning, she and I would go through whatever the lesson was for the day and we would say the Rosary together, followed by the Divine Mercy Chaplet. We would have coffee, and did this for 33 days. After we made our first consecration, we continued to say the Rosary every morning, it was just part of what we did.

“Doing that first consecration and consistently praying the Rosary brought me more into prayer and trying to figure out what I need to do,” she continues. “Right after consecration, I contacted the parish and said I’d be an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and a lector. I never stopped the morning Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet.”

Around that time, Fr. Butler also asked Judy if she would be willing to help facilitate a Bible study at the parish and she became involved, growing deeper in her faith, alongside other parishioners in our small-group Bible studies.

“Father asked me to facilitate Bible study and that was a big turn – I was very excited about getting involved there,” Judy says. “When you’re a caregiver and your focus is on the people you care for, you don’t really think about what you want to do. You’re always on your way to doing something for

someone else. It really made me think, ‘How am I giving back to the church?’ and opened the door to all these other ministries that needed help.”

It wasn’t long before this led her to become involved in a way she would’ve never expected, on the parish Evangelization Committee.

“There was one word that scared the heck out of me – ‘evangelization,’” Judy says. “But I tried to learn more about what this word, ‘evangelization’ means. Now I understand it’s sharing what you learn with other people, sharing your faith. We evangelize through our families, through the people we work with, the people around us, through what we do.”

Judy also found that her growing involvement in the parish helped her to feel connected and supported in a time of great loss.

“Doing all these things put me in a position where I’d get to meet more parishioners,” she says.

Judy encourages her fellow parishioners to find ways to become involved and give back to the parish.

“Sometimes you find yourself doing things you never expected you’d do, but you truly love,” Judy says. “Be careful about what you say you’ll never do! God has a really good sense of humor. Just go and see what it’s about.”

Judy also hopes more parishioners will come and learn about their faith through small-group Bible studies.

“What I learned, studying God’s Word and being with people who believe the same things you believe, it’s so comforting and you learn so much,” Judy says. “Don’t be afraid to come and learn, you might be really surprised at how it will affect your life.”



# St. John the Baptist

## A Significant Moment in Our Prayer *The Presentation of the Gifts*

Occasionally, you might hear someone jokingly refer to “halftime” during Mass – the interval following the Prayers of the Faithful, as the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins. It can be easy, even tempting, to zone out as you sit, waiting for the collection basket to make its way to your pew.

But if you pay attention, you’ll have the opportunity to enter into something deeper – a significant moment in our prayer.

It’s mentioned by St. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest Christian writers, when describing the Mass in the second century, “Bread is brought up and wine and water...”

This practice, of people bringing up the gifts, has been part of our Catholic tradition from the very beginning. Although we might think of this action as being merely practical, in reality, it serves a much deeper spiritual purpose.

Each Sunday Mass, someone is chosen, whether an usher, or another member of the parish, to bring forward “the gifts” – bread, wine, and in many cases, the collection of money that has been gathered moments before, from the generosity of the congregation. These gifts not only symbolize, but also in reality, are the work of human hands. The bread and wine are fruit of God’s creation, which, through the effort of human hands, are made into the gifts that we present to the Lord.

Certainly, the collection that is presented to the priest also serves to represent the work and sacrifices of the previous week. Sharing our monetary “treasures” is one of the ways that we embrace stewardship. It’s an opportunity to generously give back to the Lord, from the fruit of our work.

In his book *What Happens At Mass*, Fr. Jeremy Driscoll, OSB explains, “...We should not think of the collection of money at this point as some sort of banal, dirty but necessary affair. Money is our work. Money is hours of our lives. And now we give it away, we sacrifice it, for the work of the Church.”

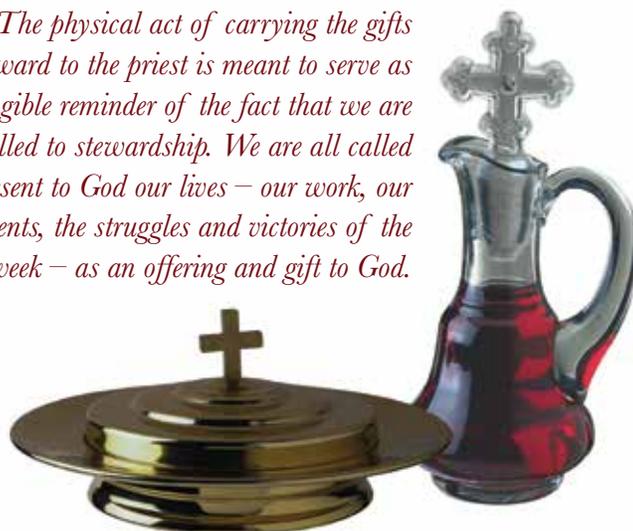
In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul instructs Christians to “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1).

The physical act of carrying the gifts forward to the priest is meant to serve as a tangible reminder of the fact that we are all called to stewardship. We are all called to present to God our lives – our work, our talents, the struggles and victories of the past week – as an offering and gift to God.

Those who bring forward the gifts each week have the privilege and responsibility of remembering what their action represents – that we are called to give generously of our time, talent and treasure to God, who gives us His very self, at Mass. And for those sitting in the pews, tempted to “check out” for a few minutes, seeing the gifts being brought forward should serve as a powerful reminder to offer our lives back to God, through serving and honoring Him.

So next week, don’t just sit back and wait for the “halftime show.” Come to Mass a few minutes early and approach an usher to ask if you and/or your family may bring up the gifts that week. Don’t be surprised if you start to notice a change in your heart and a desire to be even more generous with God in the coming week!

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## Sanctuary Lights Signify Jesus' Presence With Our Intentions

As a parish tradition for more than 10 years, our sanctuary lights flanking the tabernacle serve as beacons of remembrance and prayerful intention.

As one parishioner says, "They are a good way to remember family members who have passed, or having them lit for oneself if there is a special intention needing prayer."

The red lights, or candles, are held by the two angel statues on both sides of the altar and carry significance for us because they indicate the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle. When there is an intention requested, they are lit from Sunday through the following Saturday. The donation is \$5, and the donation covers both candles.

"If someone would like to have them lit for an intention, they can call the parish office," says Pam Fordon, parish secretary. "If there is a particular date they want, I can let them know if it is available. If there is no date selected, their requested intention can be written, placed in a separate envelope with the donation, and dropped in the collection basket. I will schedule it as a slot becomes available. It's usually a good idea to contact me about one month out from a requested date."

Pam places each intention, along with the name of the person making the request, in each weekly bulletin. Intentions can be requested anonymously.

"It is a reminder that the parish is praying for that intention," Pam says. "It's good to keep in mind the number of people in the parish who are praying for that intention. It can be specifically for a name or it can be for an intention. It can be also 'in thanksgiving.' The intention includes both candles and we'll pray for that intention for the week. Sometimes people request the week of the anniversary of a loved one's death, or a birthday.



"We like to suggest that if someone has specified a week for their intention, they may want to try to attend daily Mass that week to see the candles lit as a reminder of their intention," Pam continues. "It's a good visual reminder of that intention. And people get a sense that the parish is with them in this."



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### Mass Times

Saturdays 5:00 p.m.  
Sundays 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.  
Weekdays:  
Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.  
M, W, Th, F 7:00 a.m.

### Sacrament of Reconciliation

Tuesdays 5:00 p.m.  
Saturdays 4:00 p.m.  
or by appointment

### Adoration

Tuesdays 5-6 p.m. and  
First Fridays 7:30 a.m.-9:00 p.m.  
with Benediction 9:00 p.m.

## The New Year at St. John the Baptist *continued from front cover*

“All of my extra attention goes right to the formation of our youth and teenagers,” Fr. Butler says. “This year we have seen YDisciple, through which young people are mentored by adults, grow tremendously. Our young people give us a lot of life.”

Also, our parish will continue to host quarterly children’s Eucharistic adoration for pre-kindergarteners through 7<sup>th</sup>-grade students, which is an opportunity for them to experience Christ in an intimate way.

“We have the children at the foot of the altar, shut off the lights and put a spotlight on Jesus in the consecrated host,” Fr. Butler says. “We encouraged the parents to come to the last children’s Eucharistic adoration to share in the experience. And, many took us up on that.”

This year, the Diocese of Rockford also launched a Hundredfold vocations ministry to focus on creating a “culture of vocations” in our parishes for years to come.

“Part of this is that a team of lay people will be praying regularly for vocations, and we will have activities regarding vocations every few months,”

Fr. Butler says. “We’re also considering different ways to promote altar serving, since that is closely connected to vocations.”

Fr. Butler would like to encourage parishioners to think about taking small stewardship steps this New Year. Begin to pray a daily Rosary. Try *Symbolon* or go to adoration with your child. Add one small commitment that helps make Jesus the priority and centers your life on Him.

“I pray each day for the deep conversion of my parishioners,” Fr. Butler says. “I thank all the parishioners who are involved and invite others to do so.”

*“Giving and joy are correlated. There is a whole other way of living life when we are giving of ourselves, for there is a great joy connected to that.”*

— *Fr. Kevin Butler*