



St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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"We Are Part of a Family Here"

An Experience Like No Other *Camp WOW*

For Noah Gabrys, it was a profound experience. A sophomore, Noah was one of several St. John the Baptist parish youth who attended this year's Camp Wonder of Worship (WOW) from June 19-22. This year was Noah's second time attending Camp WOW.

"It really helped me to personally realize the amazing things that God does — to grow in my own personal relationship with Christ," Noah says. "It taught me that faith isn't all seriousness — it can be fun and exciting, too."

Hosted annually by several parishes in the Diocese of Rockford, Camp WOW is a four-day retreat designed to help middle school youth encounter the beauty and joy of Catholicism. It includes plenty of fun activities like Wacky Olympics and the "No Talent" Talent Show, as well as daily Mass, opportunities for Reconciliation, Eucharistic Adoration, and small-group discussions led by high school counselors.

Noah first attended Camp WOW last year, just before his freshman year



For sisters Kiersten and Kaleigh Bennett, Camp WOW is something to look forward to all year — a truly life-changing experience.

in high school. Encouraged through the small-group discussions and the opportunities for both personal and group prayer, Noah saw the Catholic faith in an entirely different light — one that was joyful and exciting. So, he was eager to return to Camp WOW this summer as a high school counselor.

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An Experience Like No Other: *Camp WOW* continued from front cover

“Camp WOW really helped prepare me for high school by helping me get to know other high schoolers that I could look up to,” he says. “It also just gave me that sense of knowing that God is really there for me and that there are other people out there supporting me, as well. So, I was really excited to return this year as a helper. I love that being part of this helps me give back and that I’m helping younger members of Church learn about God and how to love Him better.”

Like Noah, sisters Kiersten Bennett, a sophomore, and Kaleigh Bennett, an eighth grader, were eager to return to Camp WOW this June. Over the years, they have enjoyed meeting new friends from various parishes in the northern Illinois area, participating in all of the fun activities, and most of all encountering Christ in a new and powerful way.

“I think what I really love most is adoration,” says Kiersten, who has now attended the retreat three times. “Sure, the activities like archery are super fun, but that time in adoration is what I loved most. It was just truly powerful. We were all praying over each other, and it wasn’t just people that we knew. Being in the presence of Christ like that was just truly amazing – it actually made me cry.”

“I loved participating with everybody else in all of the activities and spending time with new and old friends,” Kaleigh adds. “Going to Confession was also really nice and easier somehow.”

Surrounded by the adult and high school volunteers, Camp WOW helps give our young people a vibrant sense of the Catholic Church. It reveals to them in a tangible way the wonder of God and the beauty of worship, giving them a real sense of what it means to belong to the Body of Christ.

“I think the most incredible thing about Camp WOW is that while we meet people and do all of these activities, what really made me draw closer to Christ was that we all did them together,” Kiersten says. “Even something like going to Confession became a lot more fun. They made it fun to love Christ – they made it interactive. And it wasn’t just our church, either, but it was many churches all coming together.”

All three of the youth agree that Camp WOW is an experience like none other – one that will permanently change the way our youth view the world and the Catholic Church. It’s a feeling, says Noah, that you wish could “keep going on forever,” and something they hope to continue being part of in future years.



Sophomore Noah Gabrys was eager to become a mentor to middle school participants of this year’s Camp WOW.

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— Kiersten Bennett

A Letter From Our Pastor

We Are Blessed as a Church and a Nation

Dear Parishioners,

The month of July may seem like a bit of an “in-between” month. Of course, it sits in the middle of summer. During this last month of June, we shared in a number of solemnities and celebrations – these served to remind us of the incredible gifts we have received as Catholics, from the Holy Trinity to the Body and Blood of Christ.

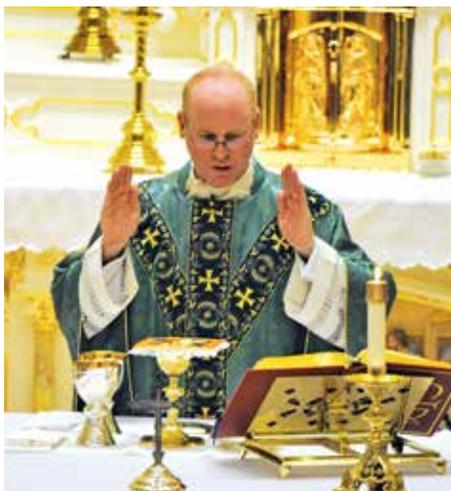
Now, a look at the calendar shows us that all of the Sundays this month are in Ordinary Time. We know that Ordinary Time is anything but “ordinary,” even though it might seem that way – especially after a month of celebrations.

However, one thing happens this month that is certainly unique to us as Americans – Independence Day. We are Catholics, but we also are Americans, and we should be proud to be both – grateful for the gift of faith, and equally grateful for the gift of liberty we receive as American citizens.

Yet, to be Catholic and American should not mean choosing one over the other. These allegiances should be complementary. Our Catholic faith states that we need to work together as fellow citizens for the common good of everyone in this great country. Through the Constitution, our Founding Fathers guaranteed us of religious rights to contribute to our common life together.

Freedom is a special inheritance we have received, fought for by many at a great price, and it is a heritage that must be guarded – we are truly stewards of the gifts of freedom.

In 1886, just over 140 years ago, Bishop James Gibbons of Baltimore was made the second American Cardinal. He attributed the progress of the Church in



America to the “civil liberty we enjoy in our enlightened republic.” He continued to say that “in the genial atmosphere of liberty, the Church blossoms like a rose.”

July is not just a time for us to celebrate – it is also a time for us to blossom. It is not a time to cease praying or working to build the Kingdom of Christ. Rather, it is a time to work even more diligently to express our appreciation for our many gifts, and to share them with others. We are blessed – by the gifts of our

faith and the gifts of freedom – and we must always remember to thank God for that.

In Christ,

Fr. Butler

Fr. Butler, Pastor



St. John the Baptist

Receiving Jesus: One Family's Experience of

Do you remember your First Communion? There was surely a lot of excitement in being dressed up, welcoming extended family into town and, most of all, walking up reverently to receive the Precious Body and Blood of the Lord for the very first time. Each year, a group of students prepares to have the same experience, as they get ready to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

This past May, Betty and Julio Salgado's youngest daughter, Destiny, was among them.

"I don't think there's any words to explain it – it's such an honor to see them receive the Eucharist," Betty says. "It is a feeling that's priceless. To see them have that intimate experience of Christ, it's truly an honor. After they receive Him, the second they look at you, there's this feeling of a huge accomplishment and, as a parent, it's priceless."

Although the formal preparation for receiving First Communion begins in second grade through the parish's Religious Education classes, for the Salgado family, the anticipation begins much earlier than that.

"We always took them up with us to Communion," Betty says. "Although they were not able to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we still take them with us for a blessing. This was hopefully planting the seed.

"It helps build those emotions and that excitement, and it helps them grow in their love for Jesus so that when that big day comes, it makes it extra special," she adds.



Julio and Betty Salgado begin helping their children understand and desire the Eucharist from a young age.

Betty likens the building anticipation surrounding the sacrament to children waiting for Christmas morning.

"They're anxious and excited, and they start to get a little nervous, the closer they get to being able to receive the Eucharist," she says. "It's kind of like when they're waiting for Christmas – they're waiting for a gift, and they start getting more and more excited."

"I don't think there's any words to explain it — it's such an honor to see them receive the Eucharist. It is a feeling that's priceless. To see them have that intimate experience of Christ, it's truly an honor. After they receive Him, the second they look at you, there's this feeling of a huge accomplishment and, as a parent, it's priceless." — Betty Salgado

f First Holy Communion



Destiny Salgado, 8, was one of our parish children to receive her First Holy Communion this past May.

Hearing her children's reflections on the Eucharist has also brought Betty into deeper contemplation – and at times, has given her a chuckle, as well.

"Years ago, I brought my middle son to receive a blessing at Communion," Betty says. "And as soon as we got back to the pew he asked, '[Receiving] Jesus in your body, how does that make your heart feel? Does it make your heart feel different?' I will never forget that. It was a very touching question."

She recalls the first time Destiny received the Precious Blood and her surprised reaction.

"She turned around to me and said, 'Wow, it's pretty bitter – I

thought Jesus' blood would be very sweet because Jesus was a very sweet man!'" Betty says, with a smile.

Betty has noticed that, since receiving their First Communion, her children's faith has truly begun to blossom and grow.

"I noticed with my other two children, when they started to participate in Communion, their personal understanding of the sacrament and their love for Jesus started to grow and challenged them to be disciples," Betty says. "I hope Destiny's love for Jesus will continue to grow, now that she can receive Him in the Eucharist."

For the Salgado family, they find that their own faith and appreciation of the Eucharist is strengthened anytime someone in their family has gone through preparation for First Eucharist.

"It's a refresher for the whole family and we experience it together," Betty says. "When we were helping Destiny prepare to receive Communion, it wasn't just my husband and me – we're all in this together as a family.

"It's always been a good reminder to step back and remember all the reason behind the Eucharist," she continues. "It can be easy to go to Mass and receive Communion and go through

the motions. But this reminds us not to take it for granted. There's not a time when we have gone through the preparation when we haven't learned something new or had an 'aha!' moment, especially with my teenagers."

We join Betty in her prayer, that all our parish children who receive the Eucharist for the first time each year will become united ever more closely to the Lord through His Precious Body and Blood.

"For my children, I hope that the Eucharist and all of the sacraments will continue to help them grow in their faith and continue their spiritual growth and love for Jesus," Betty says.



"To see them have that intimate experience of Christ, it's truly an honor," says Betty Salgado, Destiny's mother.

St. John the Baptist

The Spirituality of Stewardship *Following in the Footsteps of the Saints*

The word “stewardship” has long carried with it the association of a financial obligation to the Church. Many believe that stewardship means “giving my time and money to the Church in support of its work, lest it is unable to survive and thrive.”

Indeed, stewardship does often require sacrifice of some kind. But the reality is that stewardship is not simply a guilt-laden obligation, or a “bill.” Nor is stewardship in any way comparable to a tax payment or a charitable networking opportunity at work. Instead, stewardship is a spiritual way of life – an active response to Christ’s invitation to unreservedly “come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:19).

Stewardship is about how we respond to God’s call to discipleship, and there are many different ways we can respond to His call. We can, in turn, live the stewardship way of life simply by making small choices in our daily lives, under normal, everyday circumstances.

Nowhere in Christian history is there a more archetypal example of the variety of ways we can respond to God’s call, than in the lives of the saints. The saints represent a wide cross-section of individuals – old and young, rich and poor – living in different times in human history. Some were called to the religious life, focusing their lives on spirituality and material simplicity through prayer, and helping to form the tenets of faith. Others were individuals focused on charitable outreach, dedicating their whole lives to feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Still, others faced great adversity and challenges to their faith, and ultimately suffered death and martyrdom in loyalty to Christ and His Church.

However, the commonality that all of these individuals share is that they responded to God’s call to discipleship by utilizing the unique talents that God had given them. They did so in ways that were conducive to their individual personalities, and that actively influenced the circumstances presented to them in their respective days and times. Contemplative spirituality, charitable giving, great courage – all of these roads have led to canonization and, ultimately, eternal life with God in His glory. We are all called to do the same.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in its pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, “The challenge, then, is to understand our role – our vocation – and to respond generously to this call from God” (43). When thinking about the spirituality of stewardship, take some time to discern your talents, and how you can best respond to God’s call by naturally and effectively using the gifts He has given you. If you are a gregarious person, this might mean reaching out to a co-worker you don’t know very well, thus helping to create a hospitable work environment. If you are an individual who is often “on the go,” perhaps this means praying the Rosary while you are driving from place to place. If you have recently experienced a financial windfall or unexpected increase in income, this might mean sponsoring a little league team in your community by paying for their uniforms.

God has provided many roads to the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the saints, we see examples of the many roads that have been taken. Choosing the one that is best for us means that we can live stewardship as a spiritual practice and a way of life, and that we may answer His call to discipleship.



Denny and Sue Clifford

“We Are Part of a Family Here”

Denny and Sue Clifford attended the same Catholic grade school in Chicago and grew up in the same neighborhood. Today, the “high school sweethearts” have been married nearly 48 years.

“It has been a wonderful life together so far,” Sue says. “Since attending Catholic school as children, the faith has always been a huge part of our lives.”

When Denny and Sue moved to the area 20 years ago, they could have joined either of two parishes, but they felt strongly called to become part of St. John the Baptist’s faith community.

“From the first time we went to St. John, everyone was so friendly,” Sue says. “We felt like we fit.”

It was Denny’s “jump right in” approach to stewardship that first helped the Cliffords find ways to give back to their new community.

“He volunteered us to be Eucharistic Ministers of Holy Communion and signed me up to be a lector, even though I had never been a lector before!” Sue says. “It seems easy to say, but just do it. Just volunteer for something small.”

As they began to meet more people, Sue and Denny found that the opportunity for fellowship with other faith community members encouraged them to become more involved.

“I love to meet new people,” Sue says. “People are what drive me. Everyone in the parish is so nice, and they always need help. See where you can help in some small way.”

Bringing the Eucharist to those who are homebound offers Sue and Denny the opportunity to meet members of our parish with whom they wouldn’t be able to connect otherwise.



St. John’s Sue and Denny Clifford



Sue and Denny Clifford’s grandchildren — (top row, from left) Denny and Jake; (bottom row, from left) Joey, Mary, Tom, Olivia, baby Drea, and Ann

continued on back cover

“Serving has made our faith life stronger because we feel like we are part of a family here at St. John. God has a huge family, but here in our little parish, we share a lot together, and we’re a part of our own small family.” — Sue Clifford



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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

Denny and Sue Clifford *continued from page 7*

“Being Eucharistic Ministers led us to bring Communion to the sick and homebound,” Sue says. “What a good thing it is to be able to bring them Communion, an extension of Mass.”

Over the past 10 years of serving in this ministry, Denny and Sue have made friends with many of those they share the Eucharist with.

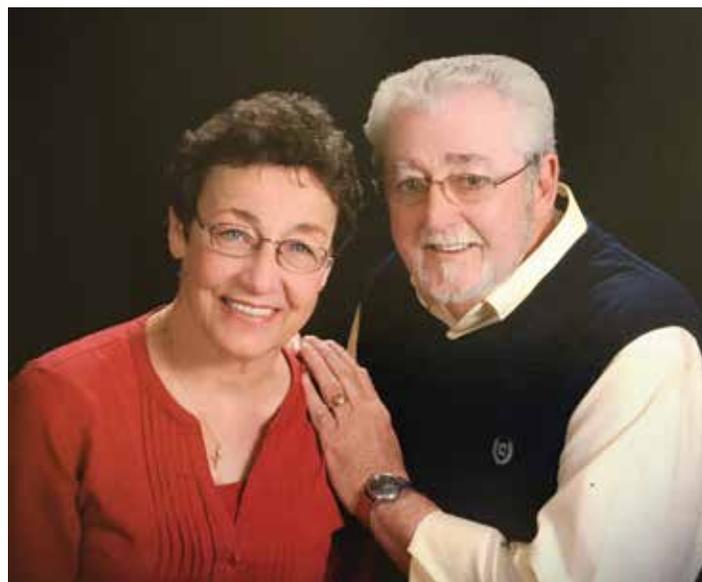
“I enjoy this so much because we go into people’s homes to visit,” Sue says. “It’s a neat thing to get to know them and to continue learning about them.”

Giving of their time, talent and treasure in whatever ways they can has furthered Denny and Sue’s stewardship journey and connection to the parish.

“Serving has made our faith life stronger because we feel like we are part of a family here at St. John,” Sue says. “God has a huge family, but here in our little parish, we share a lot together, and we’re a part of our own small family.”

Sue and Denny feel incredibly grateful to be a part of this faith family and to have their own family of three – Colleen, Megan and Matthew, another member of St. John – and eight grandchildren.

“We’d like to say ‘thank you’ to everyone at St. John for their friendship and their support,” Sue says. “Thank you especially to Fr. Butler for his kind leadership and compassion for all.”



St. John's Sue and Denny Clifford