



# St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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## St. Vincent de Paul Society Answering Jesus' Call to Serve

As the patron saint of all works of charity, St. Vincent de Paul was an ordinary person who did extraordinary things in the name of helping the poor. His legacy lives on today in the members of the St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) Society, who help thousands of people per day, all over the world.

At our parish, some of these "Vincen-tians" walk among us as members of the St. John the Baptist chapter of the SVdP Society. This ministry is made up of dedicated volunteers who have embraced the opportunity to grow in faith and friendship while helping others. Ministry vice president Anna Doherty says helping both our struggling neighbors and people we may never meet are at the heart of what the society does.

"In listening to some of our homilies and the Gospel, there is a quote from Matthew 25 that says 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' He will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me,'" Anna says. "That really always hits home for me."

Along with ministry president Denise Ramos, Anna organizes help for local residents who call the SVdP hotline looking for assistance. That help can come in



*Members of the St. John the Baptist St. Vincent de Paul Society at a recent meeting. The group assists the needy in our community through donations of food, clothing and other essentials that keep families off the street and help them thrive.*

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# St. John the Baptist

## Formation *Transformed Through Christ*



*“Jesus not only calls people to him but also forms them and sends them out in his service.”*

From *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*

This month, we are emphasizing the third pillar of parish stewardship – formation. Formation is the process of studying Christ’s teachings and incorporating them deeply into our lives. It is a lifelong effort by which we “put on Christ” (Rom 13:14) and are “transformed by the renewal of our minds” (Rom 12:2).

Above all, our formation should include studying Scripture and Church teaching. It should also include discussion with other Catholics and honest self-assessment. Its goal is to “discern the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect” (Rom 12:2).

Because formation helps us understand God’s will, it therefore leads naturally to good stewardship. When our minds are transformed through Christ, we become like Him – as Christ gave His life for us, so we give our lives to others.

Formation is not just an individual task. Instead, it is a communal responsibility that, when applied, will further help St. John the Baptist to grow as a stewardship parish. Each one of us has an inherent need to give – to move from “selfishness to selflessness,” as the Diocese of Wichita’s document *The Pillars of Parish Stewardship* aptly states. Formation is

a process of spiritual growth, and it leads to a deeper understanding of loving others as God loves us.

Naturally, then, our Catholic formation should not end upon celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation, or turning 18 years old. Formation is a formidable task that we as Catholics should participate in for the duration of our lives. It involves “education of the mind and conversion of the heart” (*The Pillars of Parish Stewardship*), and helps us to lead the stewardship way of life rather than just understand it.

This summer, why not make formation a part of your daily routine? Start off by reading 10 minutes of Sacred Scripture a day, or by studying a chapter of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on a daily basis. Read a biography of your favorite saint for an example of an individual who lived as a disciple of Christ, and use this person as a role model when tending to your daily tasks. Keep an eye on our weekly parish bulletin for faith formation opportunities at the parish. Before long, your commitment to formation will lead you to naturally live the Catholic faith and understand stewardship in ways that you never imagined before.



*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## What Is the Real Purpose of Our Lives?

Dear Parishioners,

**D**o you ever think about your purpose in life? Even as a priest, I certainly do. When I think about the real purpose in our lives, I am mindful of those who try to live without purpose. I am concerned about the fastest growing religion today, which are actually those who try to live without a religious affiliation and as if there is not a God. They are aptly called the “Nones.”

While “Nones have increased by 52 percent between 1999-2014, suicides have increased by 47 percent during the same time. There is probably a strong correlation. If we try to live without God and faith, we live without the purpose or meaning we are created for which leads us to despair. What is your real purpose and meaning of life? Is it to make a lot of money and be successful? Is it to marry and raise a family? Is it to obtain lots of material possessions – nice car, house, boat, motorcycle, etc.? Is it to make lots of friends, be popular and socialize? Come home, eat dinner, watch TV, and go to bed?

Those aren’t bad in themselves. But, most of the time they don’t fulfill us. Why? Because there is something very deep within us that says there is more to life than any of these, that there is something very great and meaningful that we are here for. But what is that purpose we yearn for?



The *Catechism* tells us that it is union with God. “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 27). It is so important that we enter more deeply in our love for God and grow ever more rooted in the practice of our Catholic faith. To live our faith is to love and serve God, and to love and serve others.

That is why at Mass, we are nourished with the Eucharist and sent to proclaim the Gospel in the lives that we live. When we do that, then the place deep down inside of us fills up and we experience peace and happiness. Volunteering or otherwise being generous with one’s time and resources to help those in need is one of the most powerful sources of meaning and purpose, and is also tremendously fulfilling. We call that stewardship of the gifts God has given us. To love and serve God, and love and serve others – to practice and live out our Catholic faith, this is what produces real purpose and meaning in our lives.

In Christ,

*Fr. Butler*

Fr. Butler, Pastor

*Volunteering or otherwise being generous with one’s time and resources to help those in need is one of the most powerful sources of meaning and purpose, and is also tremendously fulfilling. We call that stewardship of the gifts God has given us.*

## Meet Luke and New Parishioners Thankful to Have



*Luke and Mary Konopka with one of their grandchildren*

Luke and Mary Konopka may have joined St. John the Baptist less than a year ago, but that certainly hasn't stopped this couple from jumping right into parish life! When the couple moved to our area last fall, they visited a few local Catholic churches in search of a new parish home. When they first attended a Mass at St. John the Baptist in October, they knew they had found just the right place.

"There was a vibrancy of the faith that seemed apparent in the people," Mary says of their first experience in our parish. "We enjoyed the music. And it's a more traditional church, which we liked. It just felt like a good fit."

Not wasting any time before making our faith community their home, the Konopkas soon signed up for an adoration hour. At their previous church, they had become accustomed to spending an hour each week sitting in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Now, they are thankful for the opportunity to continue their devotion to this practice at every First Friday adoration.

Mary first learned to nourish a deep love for the Eucharist at a young age, through the example of her father.

"My dad was a convert from Protestantism, and became a deacon later in life," she says. "When he first came into the Church, I think there were some things he had a lot of trouble with, but the Eucharist was always something he was 'all in' on, and that's something he transmitted to his children. There is a grounding and a peace in adoration. I'm always uplifted, and feel more courageous when I come out, knowing Who really is the Lord of the world."

# Mary Konopka

## *Found a Home at St. John the Baptist*

Sitting in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist has a similar effect on Luke.

“Adoration provides me with an opportunity to let the world exist without me,” he says. “I find myself totally focused and devoted to spiritual experiences, which I cannot find anywhere else. Just by knowing that I face Christ directly – and that He experiences me and I experience Him – gives me a sense of purpose and a trajectory for the future.”

For Luke, the opportunity to worship freely is one that he will never take for granted. Born and raised in communist Poland, Luke remembers well what it was like to have to keep one’s faith hidden from the public eye.

To this day, Luke remains grateful for the freedom to practice his religion openly, and he has recently experienced the spiritual rewards of striving to live out that faith on a daily basis.

“The reality of giving time to God is relatively new to me,” he says. “In the past, my professional and family life seemed to occupy all of my time. Now I no longer feel that God’s presence is only experienced on Sunday during Mass. I’m beginning to see that God’s hand is in everything that I do, and that without Him, it is very easy to get lost.”

Mary has also found great fulfillment in participating fully in our parish by being a part of the church decorating team and the Schola Choir. In both of these ministries, she has enjoyed connecting with other parishioners and tapping into her love of art and music. Working with the Respect Life Ministry has also been important to Mary.

While the Konopkas have always made their Catholic faith a priority, Mary can look back over their life together and see a gradual progression and strengthening of that faith, helped along the way by various friends and by Mary’s involvement in Opus Dei.

*“The reality of giving time to God is relatively new to me. In the past, my professional and family life seemed to occupy all of my time. Now I no longer feel that God’s presence is only experienced on Sunday during Mass. I’m beginning to see that God’s hand is in everything that I do, and that without Him, it is very easy to get lost.” — Luke Konopka*

“Instead of being something to put on the shelf and admire from a distance, faith is just this natural, organic thing,” she says. “When you’re living that way, faith becomes like a Swiss Army knife – it always comes with me, and no matter what happens, there is a tool that can help me with any occasion. It’s my survival kit!”

The Konopkas are happy that they decided to get involved in parish life here right away. Their experiences with different ministries have strengthened their ties to the Church and to their fellow parishioners, who always inspire them to continue doing the good work of the Lord!

“When you get involved, the people you’re [serving] with are committed people,” Mary says. “They have their own struggles, but they’re able to make the church family a priority, and you see the way the Spirit works in their lives. It’s just a very uplifting and encouraging thing to do. The people of this parish are amazing – they’re so solid and so optimistic. They sustain me.”

# St. John the Baptist

## Offering Our Love and Adoration to Jesus

**E**ucharistic Adoration is the adoration of Jesus Christ present in the Holy Eucharist. Churches that have this adoration display the Eucharist in a special holder called a monstrance, and people come to pray and worship Jesus.

Christ's great love for us was shown when He was crucified on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and give us eternal life. He loves us without limit, and offers Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Can we not give Jesus a few minutes of love and adoration in return?

### **What is the importance of Eucharistic Adoration?**

Eucharistic Adoration is the respect and worship we give to Jesus, who is truly present to us under the appearance of bread and wine. The Eucharist is a priceless treasure; by not only celebrating it but also by praying before it outside of Mass, we are enabled to make contact with the very wellspring of grace.

### **What are the fruits of Eucharistic Adoration?**

People who observe Eucharistic Adoration experience a deeper devotion to Jesus, and this manifests itself in countless ways. The primary fruits are repentance and conversion, which lead to increased charity – that is, the love of Christ alive in His people. The adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist also leads to greater reverence at Mass, a deeper desire for personal holiness, and a stronger sense of union with the parish and the whole Church. Ever since the early centuries of Christianity, the Church has linked Eucharistic



Devotion to service to the poor. The practice has, more recently, led to an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.

### **What is proper etiquette during Eucharistic Adoration?**

When we are not taking part in vocal prayers and hymns with other adorers, we should be praying silently. Whenever we pass before the place where the Sacred Host is reserved, we should genuflect. We should observe the modest dress and decorum that are appropriate to very solemn occasions. We should avoid any actions that might disturb or distract others, or otherwise draw attention to ourselves rather than Jesus.

### **How should we pray during Eucharistic Adoration?**

There are many ways to pray. We may meditate in silence by gazing on the Sacred Host. We may silently speak to Jesus from our mind and heart. We may also rely on devotions and prayers from Catholic tradition, such as the reading of Scripture, recitation of the Rosary, or the litanies. When two or more are gathered before the Sacrament, they may pray or sing hymns together.

### **What is the best way to promote Eucharistic Adoration?**

The best way to promote Eucharistic Adoration is by doing it! Make frequent visits to Jesus at the tabernacle. Invite your spouse, your children, your neighbors and co-workers to join you. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us, "Because Christ himself is present in the sacrament of the altar, he is to be honored with the worship of adoration. 'To visit the Blessed Sacrament is ... a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration toward Christ our Lord'" (1418).

## Prison Ministry Sharing Christ's Love and Growing Disciples

The members of our new Prison Ministry don't yet step inside prison walls, and there is no identity beyond first names, but the ministry is sharing Christ's love to prisoners incarcerated across the country through email letters and fervent prayer.



Joe Dillett is coordinator of our Prison Ministry, which coordinates with Brother Don at the Conventual Franciscan monastery at Marytown, the location of the national shrine to St. Maximilian Kolbe, the Polish priest who volunteered to die in the place of a condemned prisoner at Auschwitz. Our Prison Ministry includes three members who correspond through email with prisoners, while the remaining members offer prayers. There is great care taken to assure the anonymity of our members. No full names, addresses or locations are revealed.

"That's the beauty of working through Marytown," Joe says. "All of the correspondence is done through email to us through Marytown."

Prisoners taking part in the correspondence send their letters to a coordinator at Marytown, who reads and forwards them to our Prison Ministry. Our members respond by email to the Marytown coordinator who, in turn, reads the responses before printing them and mailing the hard copies to the prisoners.

"The prisoners don't have any personal information about us," Joe says. "They have no idea what city we live in, and all is done on a first-name basis. Another nice thing is Marytown is experienced with prison ministry. The letters are geared to their spiritual needs. They read the letters and make sure there is nothing too personal. We're both protected."

If a prisoner asks for a Bible or a rosary, there is a procedure that must be followed, depending on the prison where the request has been made.

"We're primarily a prayer group," Joe says. "I send a list of names to our group and I'll copy Father on it, and ask them to remember them in their prayers."

Joe has found that serving in the Prison Ministry has impacted his own spiritual life by enabling him to reach out to Jesus every day. And with this growth in his own spiritual life, Joe is able to reach out to the prisoners. He currently corresponds with 20.

"I take their sacrifice to Mass with me and put it on the altar," he says. "I spiritually take them with me when I take Communion. I take a spiritual Communion to them."

"This has really increased my spiritual life," he adds. "It's truly a journey. We're not in this journey alone. I want to travel it with them. I can't walk in their shoes. I can't feel what they feel, but I can go with them and we can pray together and share with them. We have a lot of saints behind bars, and I'm trying to make more."

Through the efforts of the Prison Ministry and in keeping with St. Maximilian Kolbe's devotion to the Blessed Mother, the friars at Marytown hope the prisoners will consecrate themselves to Mary.

"They are trying to get them to consecrate themselves to Mary and to spread this devotion to the other prisoners," Joe says. "They're starting a fire through themselves in prison, and that's a very good thing. We have lots of missionaries behind bars. We send certificates to them when they do consecrate themselves. We're trying to get the chaplains to present them when there is a feast day to Our Lady."

While the Prison Ministry continues to come together as a team, Joe has great hopes for its outreach that will include actual visits to area prisons.

"I feel it has a lot of momentum," he says. "I feel its potential and we'll start making visits to prisons."

*There is a pressing need for parishioners who would like to join the ministry to write letters and to offer prayers. If anyone is interested in serving as a prisoner correspondent, contact Joe Dillett at 815-498-9290.*



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**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-9:00 PM with  
Benediction 9:00 PM

## St. Vincent de Paul Society Answering Jesus' Call to Serve

*continued from front cover*

the form of food, clothing, furniture, or assistance with rent and utilities, or repairs on a vehicle that might be a person's only way of getting to work.

"People can call and they usually leave their name and briefly tell us what they need or what their issue is," Anna says. "We do call them back and we listen to their needs. We only help them within the means that we can help them, but our goal is that they do not become homeless. We don't want them ending up on the streets, so that's what we try to accomplish."

Each encounter with the SVdP starts with a home visit as Denise or Anna try to get a better idea of what each family needs.

"At first I was a little uncomfortable because you do go into people's homes and ask a lot of questions," Anna says. "A lot of times all they want you to do is to

listen. They don't have anybody, especially the elderly and those who have mental health issues. All they want you to do is listen to them. Denise and I have found some people don't want assistance with money, they just want people to hear them so they can have their voice heard."

For those who choose to lend their time to the SVdP, Anna says there are a number of ways to help that don't involve going into homes or asking questions, whether it be by helping deliver items like mattress or furniture, taking phone calls, showing a needy family how to create a budget, or helping secure community resources.

"As trite as it seems, in all the volunteering I've done, the benefits of it give back so much to you," she says. "It gives you such a spiritual uplift and a feeling of what our Lord tells us to do."

*Interested in helping out? Please call the Parish office at 815-498-2010 and leave a message expressing your desire to volunteer. Anna Doherty or Denise Ramos will get back to you.*