



# St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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## Lectors' Passion for Ministry Comes from the Heart

Throughout Scripture, we are reminded that God's Word belongs in our hearts. We're told in Deuteronomy 30:10 to follow His Word "with all [our] heart and all [our] soul." In Psalm 119, the writer shows us that treasuring God's Word in our heart is a powerful weapon against sin. So, when we hear His Words at Mass, it's important that those who present it to the congregation present it in a heartfelt way.

Chuck Kessler has been a lector at St. John the Baptist for about 20 years. Having attended the parish since childhood, Chuck says he initially began reading as a way of getting more involved at Mass and getting to know Fr. Don DeSalvo. Prior to that, he'd had no experience speaking publicly and says that his involvement led to other opportunities to help out at church.

"Over the years, being a lector led to occasionally assisting Father



*Lector Chuck Kessler has been a parishioner at St. John the Baptist since childhood. Chuck says being a lector has broadened his appreciation for the men and women who proclaim the Gospel at Mass.*

with several other duties like dispersing ashes on Ash Wednesday and St. Blaise blessing of throats," he recalls.

Chuck says what he often thinks about is the inspiration he saw within the lectors he recalls hearing proclaim the Word when he was a young person.

"I had always admired the dedication of the people who gave of their time to share the readings," he says.

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# St. John the Baptist

## STEWARDSHIP



## THE FOUR PILLARS

You've heard about the three Ts of stewardship, but what about the four Ps?

The three Ts - Time, Talent, and Treasure - describe the personal gifts we offer to the Church. The four Ps are the Four Pillars of Parish Stewardship described by the renowned pastor Msgr. Thomas McGread. They are the hallmark of a stewardship parish - Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. Let's take a look at each of them to understand how we can improve in each area.

### HOSPITALITY

#### CHRISTIAN KINDNESS

"When I was a stranger, you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). The Gospel teaches that whenever we welcome the least of our brothers or sisters, we welcome Christ Himself. That is why the first mark of a stewardship parish is hospitality. Being friendly is one of the first ways we can be Christ-like toward others.

Modern Catholic parishes are often so large and have so many Masses that many parishioners don't know one another. To create a sense of community, be sure to smile and greet others as you enter and exit the Church. Let's try harder than ever to be a welcoming community.

### PRAYER

#### HEART-TO-HEART WITH GOD

"Do not become so involved in the work of the Lord that you forget the Lord of the work," a seminary professor once taught. In other words, don't get so caught up with parish projects and outreach efforts that you forget to draw aside to spend time with God in prayer. Every great saint has taught that prayer is the most essential component in the life of the Christian. Through prayer, we nurture our most important relationship - the one that will last for all eternity.

A healthy prayer life should include communal prayer such as Mass, as well as personal prayer and family prayer. The two biggest obstacles to prayer are lack of time and lack of understanding of how to pray. We have to schedule time for prayer just as we would for an important appointment. And we have to learn how to pray from other people. Many saints have written spiritual books that describe different methods of prayer.

### FORMATION

#### CONTINUOUS CONVERSION

Pope John Paul II always emphasized ongoing conversion. From childhood through adulthood, our whole life must be a process of drawing closer to God. He never stops calling us forward to learn more and to examine ourselves more deeply.

Very often our society values material things more than interior virtues. But as personal experience shows, when we finally acquire the car or house or "toy" that we wanted so badly, it doesn't really satisfy. On the other hand, we don't tend to desire spiritual virtues with the same kind of longing, but when we actually have them, we find them far more rewarding than material things.

### SERVICE

#### LOVE IN ACTION

"Amen I say to you, whatever you did to the least of my brothers, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). This Scripture was one of St. Teresa of Calcutta's favorites. Each time she picked up a poor and hungry child, she knew she was ministering to Christ. While we may not view ourselves as saints, we too are called to such heroic service right within our own community. As St. Teresa of Calcutta said, "To be a saint is not the privilege of a few, but the duty of everyone."

We have many service opportunities right here within our own parish. If you have the willingness to serve and take the initiative to find where you are needed, you'll find that there is no end to the families and individuals who truly need help. How can you reach out to them in love?

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## March — A Time to Take a Close Look at the Examples We Follow

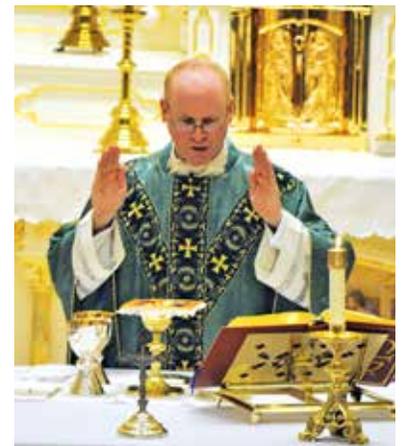
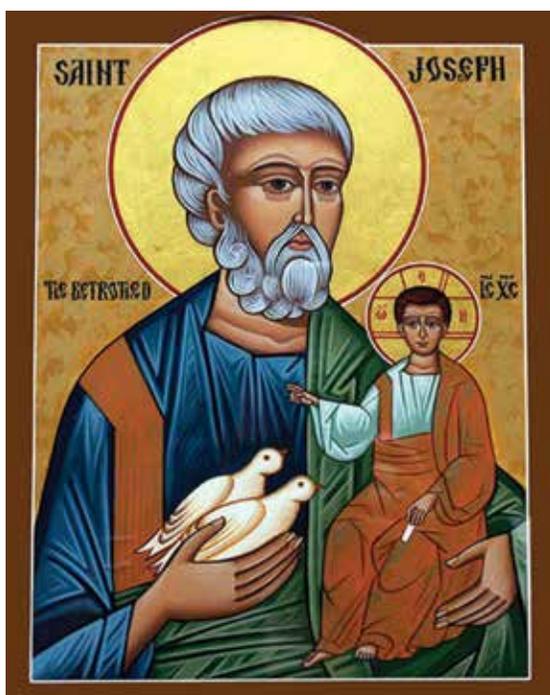
Dear Parishioners,

This month of March is a significant time for us as Catholics. We are in the midst of Lent, and then we celebrate Holy Week, with Easter occurring just after the end of the month, on April 1. In addition, many may point to the month of March as a time we celebrate the Irish on March 17, the Feast of St. Patrick.

However, two days after that is the Feast of St. Joseph on March 19 – and for many in the world, that is more important. St. Joseph was, of course, the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the foster father of Jesus Christ.

Everything we know about Joseph comes to us from Holy Scripture. It might be said that, in order to understand him completely, we must read between the lines. The Catholic Church has designated the month of March as the month of St. Joseph. Yet, there is not a single example of Joseph saying something that can be quoted in the Bible. We can assume he was a man of few words – in turn, we may consider that he speaks to us through his actions. It is also clear that he was a humble man. Many point to him as an example of what a good father is and should be.

St. Joseph provides an example to all of us. Think of some of his strengths – he was obedient; he put his own needs aside to assure that Jesus and Mary were cared for; he surely trusted in God, even when God's will may not have made complete sense to him.



Those traits give each of us some idea of what we need to do in life. Do we only embrace those parts of our faith that make sense to us or that we find agreeable? Do we put the needs of others before our own? Our lives are filled with crosses and challenges, but do we trust in the Lord as Joseph did? Do our actions show us to be good Catholics and Christians? What kinds of examples are we setting?

Lent and Easter are times for us to look closely at the answers to these questions.

All of this leads us to know and believe that Joseph was someone we would classify as a “good steward.” Who do we look up to? Do we seek to be people who are like Joseph, or are our models more worldly and more successful in the eyes of others? St. Joseph is a wonderful example for us. May we be like him in many ways.

God bless you during this holy time.

In Christ,

*Fr. Butler*

Fr. Butler, Pastor

# St. John the Baptist

## Carolyn Cothron Reflects on G

**F**or parishioner Carolyn Cothron, mother of two young sons, a parent's greatest responsibility is to prepare her children well for this life and the next. For this reason, you may often see this mother around the parish with her two youngsters in tow – whether they are attending Mass or helping to clean the church together!

Raising her sons, Gabriel, 5, and Jonathan, 2, in the faith from their earliest days is a family tradition that was modeled to Carolyn by her own parents.



*Carolyn and John with their sons, Gabriel (left) and Jonathan (right)*

“I was one of six, and my parents did a great job teaching us the Catholic faith,” she says. “I want to give my two children the best start that I can, because none of us will be here forever, but we all are going to live after this life – truly live – and we all want to get our children to that life in the best way possible.”

Carolyn has been attending Mass at St. John the Baptist since she and her husband first moved to Somonauk about 20 years ago, and she became more involved in parish life after she left full-time work when she was expecting her first child.

Looking back, Carolyn fondly recalls her first experience being involved in parish ministries.

“Once I was no longer working 10 to 12-hour days, I had more time and wanted to do something with the parish,” she remembers. “So, I did the rosary-making ministry for some time. I started when I was expecting Gabriel, and when he was a baby, I would bring him with me.

“I would take Gabriel there and put him in a walker, and he would travel around the parish and I would have to run after him,” she continues with a laugh. “Then I would come back and complete another rosary. I probably didn’t complete quite as many in those days!”

Carolyn also did a regular adoration hour with Gabriel when he was very young, and more recently, she has brought her two small sons with her to clean the church.

“The boys loved the cleaning,” she says. “My youngest is at the stage where his favorite thing is cleaning. We’d do some dusting and clean the windows, do some vacuuming and things like that. We had to stop for a while when some family things came up, but we may very well go back to it – the boys will like it if I let them do it again!”

The more she has been involved in the parish, the more Carolyn has come to feel a part of the community here. The same is true of her husband,

# iving Children the Gift of Faith

John, who was raised in the Baptist tradition, but often attends Mass with his wife and sons.

“John and I have lived here a long time, but for many years, we were just working and coming home at night to eat and sleep, so we didn’t get to know the community,” Carolyn says. “It’s been nice to get to know people better. That’s why I love the church – because of the people. Everybody is so nice and accepting, and I’ve had people offer to help with the young ones, so that’s really nice. You get to know people, and it’s important to know who you’re worshiping with.”

In both big and small ways, Carolyn is making the faith a natural part of her sons’ lives. Gabriel knows his Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be, and even little 2-year-old Jonathan can already recite most of the Our

Father! The family also has a devotional book for children that they read a verse and prayer from each day.

Carolyn loves seeing the boys begin to understand more and more about the Lord with each passing year, and she is thankful to be able to give them this most precious gift of faith.

“I can’t imagine going through life without God – you need God at every point in your life,” she affirms. “I just want my kids to always be able to have that faith that they can hold on to. No matter what, Jesus is always there. It is truly a blessing and grace from God that we wake up every day. We owe God everything – at least I can give a little of my time and do something. And when we start doing more for Him, we are the ones benefiting. Life is too short not to have God in it.”

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## Lectors *continued from front cover*

“One of my most vivid memories of church as a child were the group readings on Good Friday and Palm Sunday. For me, those readings always encapsulated the mood of Easter and Lent.”

Chuck says being a lector has at times also afforded him the opportunity to laugh at himself. Lectors often encounter some of Scripture’s more difficult to say words and are charged with pronouncing them well in front of the entire congregation.

“I remember a reading from a letter to Theophilus,” Chuck says, referencing a Greek title that can be translated as ‘friend of God’. “As much as I practiced that word, when it came time to pro-

nounce Theophilus, I drew a complete blank. My decision was to plain skip the intro and go right into the reading rather than butchering the word, thinking no one would notice. However, the only person that later mentioned my gaffe was Fr. Don. In fact, for years his nickname for me was ‘Theophilus.’”

Chuck says the anecdote is a great reminder to all lectors that one can never stop learning about their gifts.

“The best way to minimize those awkward moments is to spend time going over the reading prior to Mass, but that is no guarantee your presentation will be flawless,” he says.

*Parishioners who might have an interest in sharing their time and talent as a lector can call the parish office at 815-498-2010. New lectors meet with Fr. Kevin Butler and have a brief training session. Once this is completed, the new lector receives a letter in the mail before the next liturgical schedule is released. New lectors who have questions or concerns are also welcome to call Chuck Kessler to discuss lectoring at 815-739-2538.*

# St. John the Baptist

## The Blessings of the Catholic Mass

It is ironic that today, with all of the freedom of religion that we enjoy in the United States, many of us wonder why we must go to Mass on Sunday.

However, if we really understood what the Mass is and how we participate in the celebration, we would instead be asking why we are, as sinful human beings, blessed with the opportunity to participate in the holy Mass. If we simply understood and recognized that God's infinite goodness allows us to do so, we would be eager to go to Mass on Sunday and every other day of the week.

It is true, however, that all Catholics are obliged to "Keep holy the Lord's Day" by sharing in the Mass. But why are we obliged?

The Eucharistic Liturgy is the center of our faith. It is "the summit toward which all activity of the Church is directed" and it is "the font from which all her power flows" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 10). It does not exhaust the activity of the Church, but is most certainly her greatest work.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is literally represented to the Father during Mass, and Christ allows us to join with Him in offering that sacrifice. Imagine our Lord and Savior dying on the cross for us right up the street. Imagine knowing that Mary is sitting at the foot of the cross with St. John, witnessing her Son giving Himself to the Father for the sake of all of us. Would we not run to be there? Would we not desire to share in His sacrifice, just as Mary did?

Believe it or not, the sacrifice of Calvary is really, truly happening at our parish, every time the Mass is offered.

Our participation in Mass gives us the strength and the graces we need to live our lives as Christ's



disciples. So, what does this mean for us?

This means we have a front row seat to the sacrifice of Calvary. Given such a gift, how can we not accept it?

We also have a chance to join in Jesus' sacrifice by offering our own prayers and petitions. As an example, what better gift could we give deceased loved ones than the offering of prayers for their souls in purgatory?

Most importantly, we have the opportunity to receive the Eucharist, followed by quiet time, when we offer sincere thanks and allow God's graces to fill us. Think of all you are missing when you do not properly prepare yourself to receive the Holy Eucharist.

We ought to joyfully head to Church each Sunday, eager to give God glory in the greatest way we can! Attending and actively participating in Mass every Sunday is our obligation as Catholics. But we should not allow the fact that our attendance is "required" to stop us from going. Nor should we allow our laziness to overshadow the amazing privilege and the many blessings that lay before us in the Mass.

The pope and the bishops direct us to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy every Sunday because they know there is no better way to keep holy the Lord's day – giving God thanks for all He has done for us in the most powerful way possible. They know that, through the Mass, we gain the graces necessary to live our lives in this world.

Our ability to participate in the Mass is a wonderful gift, not a great burden. May Christ enlighten our minds and hearts to clearly see the wonders of the celebration, and give us great enthusiasm and eagerness to participate.

# We Are Drawn Closer to God Through Sacramentals

We are familiar with the term “sacraments,” and most of us have learned and experienced in part the seven traditional sacraments in the Church – Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony.

Our English word “sacrament” is derived from the Latin words *sacramentum* and *sacro* (which meant hallow or consecrate) and the Latin word *sacer* (sacred, holy). The sacraments were instituted by Jesus Himself and entrusted to the Church. They are visible rites seen as signs and channels of the grace of God.

However, we also have in the Church something called “sacramentals.” According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy” (1667).

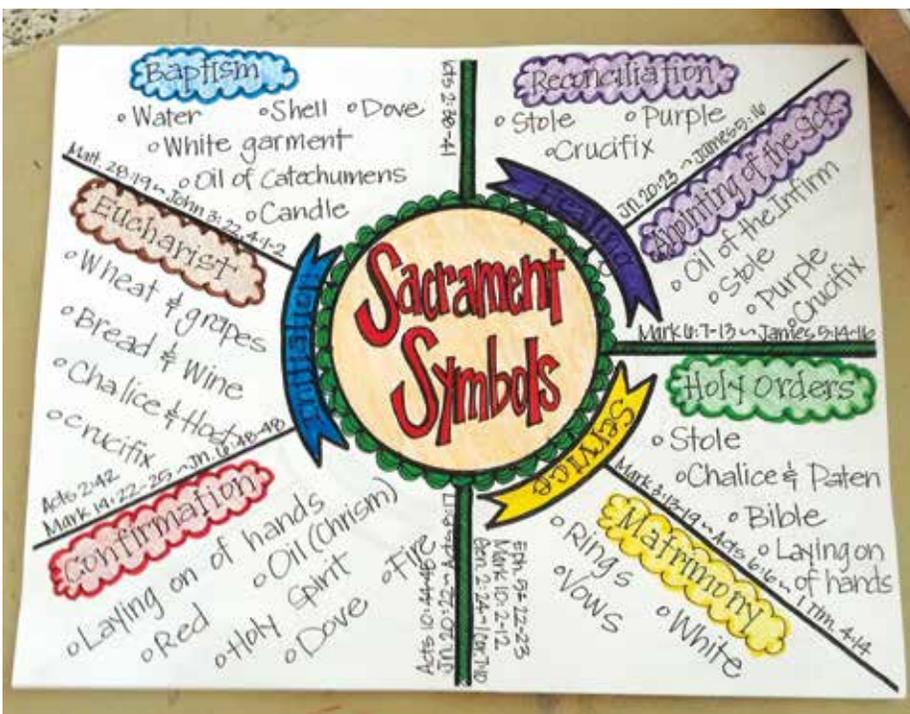
“They are items and actions which relate us to the sacraments,” says Fr. Kevin Butler. “Personally, I love sacramentals because they bring me closer to God. I have always encouraged people to use sacramentals in their own devotions. Most of us as Catholics use and acknowledge them consistently, even if we are not aware of it.”

Like the sacraments, sacramentals can be divided into groups, although some things fall into more than one group: First are blessings, which are used throughout Church practices, liturgies, and traditions. We bless palms, candles, ashes and, of course, people. The blessing itself is a sacramental. Second are exorcisms – the Church has long believed that sacramentals assist with driving away evil spirits. They might be prayers, and they might also be objects such as religious medals. Third are blessed objects of devotion – the Church maintains that there are a variety of objects which inspire devotion in us. Included here could be holy water, candles, ashes,

palms, crucifixes, stained glass windows, statues and other common items for us, such as scapulars, rosaries and Miraculous Medals. Finally, are rubrics and prayers – not only are these sacramentals, but much of what we do in relation to them are also sacramentals, like bowing our heads, making the Sign of the Cross, genuflecting and kneeling. Many of these sacramentals, we often encounter or perform without a thought to their significance.

“I want people to be more aware that our Catholic lives and our church are filled with sacramentals, and they are all ways to bring us closer to the Lord,” Fr. Butler says.

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# St. John the Baptist

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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

## We Are Drawn Closer to God Through Sacramentals

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Longtime parishioner Mary Ann Ehmke has a great appreciation and understanding of sacramentals.

“My life and my habits have always been filled with sacramentals,” she says. “As intended, they remind me of my faith and the sacraments. I taught Religious Education here at the parish for almost 40 years, and I always tried to foster in my students an awareness of sacramentals and how to use them. They are important. Since I was a young girl, I have worn a medal, which reminds me of my faith and Christ’s expectations of me. As Father indicated, they bring me closer to God.”

Even our Bibles can be considered as sacramentals. Certainly, these beautiful indicators of our faith and beliefs surround us.

“I want the people of St. John the Baptist to have a complete grasp of the Church, of what we believe, and of the way that sacramentals can enhance our faith and our faith lives,” Fr. Butler says. “We have instituted an effort to have each of us identify who our

favorite saint might be. Doing that is a worthy goal, and if that brings us closer to God, that mere effort is a sacramental.”

*“[Sacramentals] are items and actions which relate us to the sacraments. Personally, I love sacramentals because they bring me closer to God. I have always encouraged people to use sacramentals in their own devotions. Most of us as Catholics use and acknowledge them consistently, even if we are not aware of it.”*

— Fr. Kevin Butler

