

St. Peter's Currents

July/August 2012

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Community Caring for Life Ministry *Advocates for the Culture of Life*

We often think of Christ's promise that "Whatsoever you do for the least of my brethren, that you do unto me" in terms of serving the poor; but one parish ministry at St. Peter has a different group of people in mind: the most marginalized group in society – the unborn.

The Community Caring for Life Ministry is a pro-life education and advocacy group at St. Peter. After years of inactivity, parishioner Carol Mulvihill felt called to reinstate the ministry.

"Our group had sort of died off a number of years ago, because there wasn't anyone to lead it," Carol says. "But defending life is too important, so I got together a group about three years ago and we started it up again."

These days the ministry meets the third Tuesday of every month from 1-2 p.m. at the parish.

"There are six of us in what I call the 'Core Group,'" Carol says. "We get together to talk about local events and what's going on in the culture-at-large. Our approach is three pronged: we engage these issues with education, with prayer and with action."



The Community Caring for Life Ministry recently held a baby shower on behalf of a local crisis pregnancy center

The group members take their own education very seriously, striving to always equip themselves with the fullness of truth before bringing the Catholic voice to the public square.

"We recently read Pope John Paul II's encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, and really took the time to explore the teachings of the Church so that we are well-rooted in that," Carol says. "It is a key teaching of the Faith to respect human life in all forms from conception to natural death. I have a special fondness for Pope John Paul II, and he spoke about how we live in a Culture

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Advocates for the Culture of Life *continued from front cover*



(above and below) Items collected during the Mother-Daughter Baby Shower included diapers, clothes, a "Pack-and-Play" and more.



of Death right now and we need to turn things around back to a Culture of Life."

In their efforts to educate, the ministry members regularly provide the parish with resources on important life-related issues as well as bring in guest speakers to the parish. The group regularly encourages parishioners to write to government representatives regarding pro-life legislation. With important elections coming up in November, the ministry will be distributing Catholic voting guides for local and national candidates.

In a day and age where pro-life values are increasingly under attack, this life-affirming ministry relies on consistent prayer now more than ever.

"We believe we should always pray asking for God's help in this struggle, so we offer everything we do to the Lord," Carol says. "Obviously we can't do it on our own. So, we begin and close all of our meetings with a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking Him to guide us in doing God's will and doing what would be best for His Church here on earth. We also do prayer vigils at the Planned Parenthood in St. Paul, and coordinate Rosaries for Life and pray a special Rosary for the end of Euthanasia on the anniversary of Terri Schiavo's death."

The Community Caring for Life Ministry does a great deal of work through its educational initiatives, but the ministry members also raise their voices in the public square and host events at the parish.

"We participate in the 40 Days for Life rallies and prayer vigils," Carol says. "And this spring, we hosted a Mother-Daughter Baby Shower and gave all of the gifts to our local crisis pregnancy center, the Wakota Life Care Center."

While the ministry is currently taking a few months off for the summer, it will be kicking things into high gear again in September and October with Respect Life Sunday and additional events.

As things pick up this fall, all parishioners are invited to participate in the group's initiatives as well as consider becoming core members.

"We are always looking for new members," Carol says. "One of the challenges is that we live in a very mobile society where people are very active. Carving out the time can be difficult, but it is such an important area to be involved in. In this ministry I see God's miracles time and again when faithful people speak out for the truth!"

Anyone interested in becoming a regular member of the Community Caring for Life Ministry can attend the group's monthly meetings or contact Carol at 651-453-1345. Information about all upcoming events will be listed in the weekly parish bulletin.

Summer Doesn't Mean a Vacation from God

Dear Parishioners,

The kids are out of school and our fast-paced lives centered on school and youth sports activities have slowed down. Our own internal clocks are now on summer time. We're ready for a break from our hectic lives.

And while we take vacations and enjoy the leisurely pace of the season, we need to remember that summer is not the time to take a vacation from God.

There may be a Sunday from time to time during the summer months when the obligation to attend Mass may seem a bit inconvenient. Maybe we're out of town on vacation. Maybe we are going to a summer cookout with friends and family. Maybe we are heading to the lake. Or maybe we have great seats down the first base line for a Twins game. And maybe we rationalize to ourselves: "One Sunday isn't a big deal, I almost never miss!" or "I'll make it up to God somehow."

But what does the Church say regarding our Sunday obligation, and how serious are the stipulations?

The Catholic Church maintains certain precepts, or laws, described by the *Catechism* as the "indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort." These precepts include Mass attendance on Sundays and holy days of obligation, and reception of Holy Communion at least during the Easter season. As previously stated, the maintenance of these laws is the "indispensable minimum," or in other words, the very least we are expected to do as Catholics to maintain and proclaim our Christian faith.

Sunday is the primary holy day of obligation, along with other designated days throughout the year. The Sunday obligation is only fulfilled through the Divine Liturgy. No Sunday service apart from a Catholic Mass is sufficient.

This precept of obligatory Sunday Mass was not randomly invented; rather, it is a commandment of God. Grounded



firmly in our Jewish roots, this law was originally revealed to Israel as recorded in the Old Testament. The commandment was set in stone (literally!) as one of the Ten Commandments, requiring that God's people: "Keep holy the Sabbath."

The Sabbath observance was continued with the earliest Christians, yet moved to Sunday in order to celebrate the risen Christ. As stated in the Acts of the Apostles: "On the first day of the week [Sunday], when we gathered to break bread..." The New Testament reveals that Christians were set apart from their

Jewish brothers and sisters through Sunday Eucharistic worship.

The *Catechism*, therefore, declares that "those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin." Its designation as a "grave sin" clearly states the manner in which this action affects our souls: it is potentially mortally sinful. There is no question as to whether or not falling short of our Sunday obligation is a "big deal." Of course it is! This is God's law. Yet, keep in mind the flipside of this command: by attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion, we are cleansed from past sins, preserved from future sins, and develop an intimate union with Christ Jesus. What more could we ask for? The choice, as always, is ours to make.

So, enjoy the warmer temperatures and the relaxed atmosphere. Just don't forget who provides all the summertime fun! And most importantly, don't take a vacation from God this summer, and be sure to take Him on vacation wherever you go!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Joseph Gallatin
Pastor

And while we take vacations and enjoy the leisurely pace of the season, we need to remember that summer is not the time to take a vacation from God.

St. Peter Parish Prep Annual Fall Festival



On Oct. 7, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., St. Peter parishioners will gather on the parish grounds for delicious food, loads of entertainment, and communal fellowship during the annual Fall Festival.

“It’s a fun way to start off the year in the fall,” says Nancy Stanton, who serves on the Fall Festival Committee. “Everybody’s back from summer vacation and is getting back together, and there is always something for everybody to do, from older folks down to young people. It is always a good opportunity for parishioners and visitors to greet each other and get to know each other.”

“I like to be involved in the parish, and I want to help and bring them into the church as well.” – Nancy Stanton, Fall Festival Committee Chair

Many popular events and activities will return for this year’s edition of the Fall Festival, including the cakewalk, sponsored by the Council of Catholic Women. Lucky winners will have the opportunity to take home one of more than 100 homemade cakes, donated by parish volunteers. For our younger parishioners, there will be plenty of games and activities, including sack races. And for those who would like to test their skill with a golf club, there will be a closest-to-the-pin competition, with the winners in each category receiving a great prize from the Mendakota Country Club.

With lunch being served after the 11 a.m. Mass, this year’s festival will feature a wide variety of delicious foods. Outside vendors will have snacks for sale, and the parish youth minis-



(top left) Fall Festival attendees gather beneath a tent for treats and fellowship; (middle left) Grabbing a corn dog or cheese curds; Scouts play carnival games at the Fall Festival; (bottom left) Crafts for sale; (bottom right) Delicious cakes are among the prizes for the CCW Cake Walk

...ares to Celebrate the ...all Festival

try members will sell fresh-squeezed lemonade to help raise money for their mission trip to a Catholic Workcamp. And of course, the popular deep-fried doughnut holes and French fries will be making their return for 2012!

Nancy says that the primary purpose of the Fall Festival is to help create a true sense of community at St. Peter, which is an important part of fulfilling our spiritual mission as a parish family.

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“To me, the parish community is like a great big family, not just ships passing in the night,” she says. “It’s a fellowship centered in Christ, and the more people you become familiar with, the more support that you get spiritually. It just helps to make you more centered in the church when you know a lot of people,

and if there is ever an emergency or a tragedy, you know that those people will be there to help.”

For Nancy, helping to organize the Fall Festival gives her a sense of fulfillment, and it’s also a great way to give back to God in thanksgiving for the many gifts He has given her.

“I’ve had a number of people reach out to me and say, ‘You seem to be very happy in a simple way,’ and it’s because of the people I’m with, the joy of serving, and the joy of helping,” she says. “I like to be involved and help out at the parish, and I want to reach out to others and bring them into this, so that they can enjoy it as well. It makes my religious life better, and I feel that it gives my life value.”

The Fall Festival is only possible because of the hard work of its volunteers, and there are still many opportunities to help out in a variety of capacities. All parishioners are welcome and encouraged to volunteer. For more information, please contact Sara Rogers at 651-905-4308 or srogers@stpetersmendota.org.



(top right) The Fall Festival is a popular event each year, drawing quite a crowd; (middle right) The festival is fun for all ages! (bottom right) Games are a big hit among the children and teens; (bottom middle; bottom left) Many parish families attend the Fall Festival together; perusing the crafts for sale

Parishioner Profile: Meet the Vogel Family

A few years ago, John and Jennifer Vogel decided to purchase a brick at a parish fundraiser with the names of their children, Olivia and Ben, engraved on it. Now, when they attend Mass, the brick is a visible reminder of their Catholic identity, something tangible to show their children exactly where they belong.

For John and Jennifer, the brick is also symbolic of the gift of faith that was passed on to them by their own parents, both by word and example. Growing up, Jennifer remembers praying the Rosary with her family, attending parish events, and seeing her parents volunteer on a regular basis. John's father was involved for many years with the Prison Ministry, and his mother was active in the Pro-Life Movement.

And so it comes as no surprise that, as parents, John and Jennifer wanted to build on their parents' example of being active in parish life; in other words, they wanted to pass on that same sense of belonging and community to their own children that they experienced while growing up.

And they found it here at St. Peter. Active in our parish now for 14 years, the Vogels participate in various ministries, both individually and as a family. John is an usher at Mass and is active in the Men's Club. Jennifer, for the past seven years, has coordinated a women's Bible Study which meets Tuesday mornings in the parish. Olivia and Ben have been altar servers and have been involved in Workcamp and Week of Hope, in which they volunteer during the summer to paint homes, build ramps for the disabled, and help with home repairs. This also involves organizing bake sales and car washes to raise funds.

"It's important to teach kids to get involved," John explains. "Recently Ben helped me with my work in the Men's Club to spread mulch on the parish grounds. It was something

simple, but it's an important lesson in that we all have a responsibility to help build up our community."

To be sure, sometimes it's difficult to take that first step to get involved, and there are many things that can stand in the way. Sometimes the lack of time is a factor, sometimes we are reluctant to come out of our comfort zone, or sometimes we

simply don't know anyone. But John says that volunteering is simply part of life, just like going to work, attending Mass, or socializing with co-workers or neighbors.

"The key is to start small," says Jennifer. "If they need volunteers to hand out pamphlets, sign up for a time slot. Volunteering is not all or nothing; there doesn't have to be a huge impact. But if you start small, you'll begin to see the same faces, you'll start to make connections, and before you know it you

will have found your niche. Of course, it's also important to make it meaningful so that it doesn't become an obligation but something you really look forward to doing."

As with many families today, the Vogels are busy. Between work (John is in sales at NSK Bearings and Jennifer is an office manager at R.J. Ryan Construction), school, sports, volunteering, and parish activities there is not a lot of free time. But John and Jennifer recognize that importance of spending time together as a family. It's not always easy to find that time, but one thing that works for them is that they often make dinnertime a priority in their household.

"We really try to have dinner together at least a few times a week," says John. "Sometimes that is the only chance to pray together; then, because everyone is sharing a meal together, you are basically forced to talk, and that's a good thing!"

Finally, John and Jennifer were taught by their parents the importance of passing on Catholic Faith and traditions to the next generation. This way, much like that brick, their children become part of something greater.



John and Jennifer Vogel with their children, Olivia and Ben

Stewardship

How to Get Started

So you have heard the word “stewardship” more frequently and may not know what to think. Doesn’t stewardship apply only to those holy-rolling do-gooders in the parish? Or, maybe you have tried stewardship by saying occasional prayers and dropping money in the offertory basket from time to time. By now, you may wish people would stop hounding you about stewardship and give you some peace. After all, you are trying to live a good Christian life, right?

Wherever you fall in your understanding of stewardship, thoughts like these have no doubt crossed your mind. As you evaluate your role as a steward, you may find yourself wondering why you even need to participate in the first place or how you can possibly give more of yourself to God when you are already pressed for time, energy, and money.

The first thing to remind yourself as you try to answer these questions is that God is the source of all three of the Ts of stewardship — our time, our talents and our treasure. If it were not for God we would not have any of them. Then, focus on how you are receiving His gifts. Do you feel entitled to all He has given you and demand even more from Him? Or, do you thank Him for His abundant generosity, and as a sign of that gratefulness, return a portion back to Him as a sort of thank you note?

God, in His infinite love and mercy for us, grants us these gifts during our time on Earth even though we do not deserve them. As a sign of appreciation, we can give Him a return on His investment. If God gives you a free Saturday afternoon, you could take your kids to confession instead of watching sports on television. If God gives you cooking skills, you could prepare a meal for a family with a newborn baby instead of going shopping. Financial choices are applicable to stewards as well. Do you waste your financial resources or take them for granted or do you carefully think what portion you should return to God?

Whatever your understanding of stewardship, remember it is not a rule or mandate – it is an invitation. No one is forcing you to live life of a good steward. Our realization that God has blessed us – wherever we are in our faith journey – should drive our yearning to give back of our time, talent, and treasure. Out of love for our Creator – and to continue to grow in His love – we should desire to give stewardship, as a way of life, a try.



The first thing to remind yourself as you try to answer these questions is that God is the source of all three of the Ts of stewardship — our time, our talents and our treasure.

Church of St. Peter

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Thank You, Parish Volunteers!



Fr. Gallatin (center) and the parish staff display a sign thanking volunteers at the end of the recent Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. Some staff even wore poodle skirts as part of the evening's entertainment. A special thanks goes out to all parish volunteers – without you, St. Peter Parish could not do all of the good work it accomplishes each day. God bless you and your efforts!

www.stpetersmendota.org

Weekend Mass: Saturday, 5:00 p.m. Vigil | Sunday, 9:00 & 11:00 a.m.

Daily Mass: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m.

Confession: Saturdays, 4:00 - 4:45 p.m. and by appointment