



St. Peter's Currents

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Sacraments of Initiation Bring Young People Closer to Christ and the Church

Along with Baptism, the Sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation are Sacraments of Initiation into the Catholic Church. When a child receives the Sacrament of First Communion, he is welcomed into the Church and joined with Christ in a special way through the Eucharist. Likewise, the Sacrament of Confirmation welcomes young people into full membership in the Catholic

Church by a special outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Here at St. Peter's, students prepare to receive the Sacrament of First Communion during the second grade. During this time of preparation, they attend classes on Wednesdays between January and April, either at 4:30 p.m. or 6:30 p.m. They are required to attend a few additional classes along with their parents, as well as a special Mass and mini-retreat day.

Kathy Raible, Director of Religious Education and Faith Formation at St. Peter's since 2000, enjoys working with parents and children to help them prepare for First Communion.

"Children open their hearts to the Holy Spirit in a way that can be truly inspiring to us as adults; their trust in the love of God is sincere and simple," Kathy says. "Helping them into a stronger relationship with Christ through the Eucharist



Sacraments of Initiation

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and teaching them how to live with others as a Christian is important to me.”

Students begin preparing for Confirmation in the spring of their ninth-grade year, and continue until they are finally confirmed in June of their tenth-grade year. Confirmation classes are held on Sunday mornings from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., and the candidates are expected to attend the 9 a.m. Mass as part of the class.

Early on in the preparation process, candidates are required to choose a Confirmation sponsor. The sponsor must be at least 18 years of age, and must be a practicing, confirmed Catholic. Students are encouraged to choose someone they

trust and with whom they feel comfortable discussing their faith.

“The job of the sponsor is to be a spiritual mentor to the candidate, and a companion on the faith journey,” says Ed Overell, youth coordinator at St. Peter’s since 2006. “We ask the candidates to find a role model who they look up to and are comfortable talking to about their faith — someone who they respect as a person of faith.”

The Confirmation sponsor plays a significant role in the Confirmation preparation process. They are encouraged to meet with the candidates at least once a month, and are expected to attend a few events throughout the year, including an

orientation where they are given guidelines and discussion topics to go over with the candidates.

Just like First Communion, the Sacrament of Confirmation is an integral part of the process of initiation into the Catholic Church.

“It is through Confirmation that Catholics come into the full membership of the Catholic faith through the empowerment of the gifts of the Holy Spirit,” Kathy says. “It enables them to make use of those gifts as an adult, and helps them to make their way in this world that doesn’t always honor Christian values.”

For more information, please contact Kathy Raible at 651-905-4311, or Ed Overell at 651-905-4312.



“Children open their hearts to the Holy Spirit in a way that can be truly inspiring to us as adults. Their trust in the love of God is sincere and simple. Helping them into a stronger relationship with Christ through the Eucharist and teaching them how to live with others as a Christian is important to me.”

— Kathy Raible, Director of Religious Education and Faith Formation

Lenten Subtraction Also Needs Addition

Dear Parishioners,

You may have heard someone say, "Lent and Easter are late this year." That is not really true in an actual sense (in the next 25 years Ash Wednesday is in March nine times, once as late as March 10). However, this month of March is the time we need to focus on both the meaning of Lent and what that means to us as Catholics.

According to the Church, Lent officially begins at midnight on Tuesday, March 4, as March 5 is Ash Wednesday. Like ourselves, you probably have already seen Lent as a time to "give something up," to make yourself more holy. These three practices of Lent have always been highlighted: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. We are indeed called to try to infuse those things into our lives more deliberately during Lent. However, we would point out to you that two of the three require action, not rejection. Prayer and almsgiving are things we must do. Fasting involves denial.

The word "Lent" comes from the Middle English word *lencten*, which actually means "lengthening," as when the days get longer. We all appreciate the fact that the days begin to get longer, and we have more daylight. We would maintain that all of this means "new life" and that is what we are really called to during this Lenten season.

From a stewardship perspective we would suggest to you that Lent and our preparation for Easter calls us to a different way to look at our Lenten preparation. Yes, Lent is a time for repentance, a time for establishing ourselves spiritually for Easter. We may think it is a time for us to seek God's grace, but we would point out to you we have already been given God's grace. What we need to do is to



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try to develop more intensely in God's grace. How can we as good stewards do that?

Giving something up is certainly one way, but we would suggest that we expand that. If you give something up, add something positive in its place. Lots of people give up candy. Should we not add fruit and vegetables in its place? If you fast, which is certainly beneficial, should you not place prayer in its place? If you give up television, what do you replace it with? Perhaps we could give that time away through a parish ministry. It is those positive, action-oriented things we do to make our lives better, and our spiritual lives more full that really reflect stewardship and our willingness to do more during Lent, not less.

We have heard of one Catholic high school where the students fast on Fridays during Lent. What makes that act particularly significant is that they then donate to the poor the money they would have spent on the meal, and those who follow the fast gather during lunch for prayer. There it is — all three Lenten practices — prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Sometimes we make this too complicated. This month is the perfect time for us each to evaluate our lives, and to do something positive to make our lives more holy and more spiritually fulfilling. It is a time for us to commit ourselves to stewardship as a way of life.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

St. Peter's Stewardship Committee

Lenten Fish Dinner Builds Community

The Friday night fish dinner during Lent is a favorite annual tradition for many Catholic parishes around the country. It provides parishioners with the opportunity to spend time together while observing the Lenten tradition of abstaining from eating meat on Fridays.

“The main purpose of the Lenten Fish Dinner is to provide an opportunity for our parishioners to enjoy some time with each other,” says Sara Rogers, Community Life Coordinator for our parish. “It is a community-building event where people can sit and talk with one another, and maybe even meet some new friends, all while enjoying some great food. Since it usually happens in the middle or at the end of winter, it’s always nice to have a reason to get out of the house.”

This Lenten season, our parish will be hosting the annual Lenten Fish Dinner on Friday, March 21, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Heritage Center.

The menu for the fish dinner includes a number of side dishes and dessert. There will be coloring sheets and crayons available for the children, and plenty of opportunities for the adults to socialize and share in fellowship with one another.

“The event is solely focused on community building,” says Sue Kirk, who organizes the Lenten Fish Dinner. “Friends and families alike enjoy the atmosphere of a great meal and great company.”

The Lenten Fish Dinner is operated completely by generous volunteers who work in the kitchen, clear the tables, wash dishes, set up prior to the dinner and break down once it is over.

“Volunteers are welcome,” Sue says. “We do have limited spots in the kitchen due to the fact I use a pretty talented group of regular people!”

Once the dinner has concluded, everyone is invited to attend Stations of the Cross in the main church at 7 p.m.

Whether you come to eat and visit with other parishioners or work as a volunteer, the Lenten Fish Dinner provides a wonderful opportunity to practice hospitality and build community with our parish family, and it is one of the ways we can live out the theme for our Stewardship Renewal — “Growing the Family of God.”

“It’s a way to connect as Catholics who have all abstained from eating meat on Fridays,” Sara says. “Many Catholics also travel around to different Lenten dinners in the area, so we welcome anyone who wants to attend!”

For more information about the Lenten Fish Dinner, or if you would like to volunteer, please call Sue Kirk at 651-260-9526 or email her at suekirkmn@gmail.com.

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Classmate's Experience Leads to Documentary Topic for Local Students

A small group of students from the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University chose to spend their Christmas and New Year holidays far from the comfort of their homes and families. Two days before Christmas, they traveled to Thailand to document and tell the story of fellow humans who have been driven from their homes by their government in an act of ethnic persecution.

St. Peter parishioners Sean Raible, a senior, and Megan Towle, a sophomore, students at St. John's University and College of St. Benedict, respectively, are members of Extending the Link, a student-led group that targets social justice issues around the world for study and education through the documentary films they produce. Sean is co-director of ETL.

"Our motto is 'think globally, act locally,'" Sean says. "We take a global topic and connect it to our small school in central Minnesota."

Sean notes that the experiences of traveling the globe with the ETL team has enabled him to make a connection to his faith in the shared humanity of the world.

"Last year in India, we visited a hospital," he says. "You sort of see the face of God in all the individuals at the end of the day. I recall one moment I was in the hospital with patients while they were painting different subjects. I had learned the word for 'beautiful.' I complimented one of the men on the painting he was doing — and I have never seen a smile like that before. I realized that we're all different faiths and beliefs, but at the end of the day we share the same experience — we're part of this greater idea and a greater presence."

Recently, the group of seven made the 22-hour flight to Thailand, where they spent three weeks going into refugee camps housing the Karen (Ka-REN) people of Myanmar, formerly Burma.

"The Karen are an ethnic group who were persecuted by their government," Sean says. "They had to flee, and many made their way to Thailand where they achieved refugee status. We were filming interviews with individuals and community leaders, and with non-government organizations — NGOs — that are working with the refugees. They are a displaced people."

The ETL group is currently working on editing their footage and composing a script for the documentary film.

"At the end of March, we will present our documentary at the Notre Dame International Peace Studies Conference and will have a premiere on our university campus the second week of April," Sean says. "We'll show it in different communities and conferences that we feel it can relate to. We're making plans to submit it to film festivals, as well."

Sean, who carries a double major of political science and sociology, with an emphasis on pre-law, first joined ETL when he applied for a position in the spring of his sophomore year.

"I was given the position of researcher," he says. "My job last year was to research the topic for that year — the stigma of mental illness in Calcutta, India. I traveled to Calcutta with our team and I did the filming. I helped write the script and did narration. At the end of the year, I was promoted to co-director."

The group learned about the Karen refugees when a team member told the group about one of her St. John's classmates she had met during a study trip to China.

"He told her his story," Sean says. "He is a Karen, and he came to the United States from the camps. We heard his story about growing up in the camps and his process of becoming a citizen and his assimilation to the U.S. culture. When we were choosing a topic — refugee issues — and when we learned about our connection on campus, we made the Karen story our focus. It was something one of our classmates had experienced. This makes it more powerful."



The ETL group after they made their arrival in Thailand.

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The Wise Men's Gifts Symbolize Our Lenten Obligations

We experience great joy when we celebrate the coming of the Magi at Epiphany each year. For many of us, it is the completion of Christmas. Yet, the gifts offered by the Magi — gold, frankincense and myrrh — can be a guide for us as we plan our Lenten observances this year.

It may seem strange to connect the joyful celebration of Epiphany with the penitential season of Lent. Yet, our spiritual life should not be divided into separate bits having no connection with each other. In the same way, the Church's liturgical year should also flow from one season to another. The different feasts and seasons certainly have different emphases, but they are intended to build on each other. So let's see if we can connect what the Magi gave Jesus with what we're going to offer Him this Lent.

The basic ingredients for our Lenten rule normally come from what are termed the Three Notable Duties — prayer, fasting and almsgiving. These in turn come from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

How do we connect the wise men's gifts with the notable duties? Actually, what the gifts symbolize matches up surprisingly well.

Frankincense is the basic ingredient in the incense used in the worship of God, in the ancient world and in the Church today. Offering it to Jesus points out His divine nature, and so it symbolizes prayer. Our Lenten rule needs to include prayer and worship. Of course, we are bound to worship at Sunday Mass year-round. Maybe during Lent, we might add a weekday Mass. Perhaps we can increase the time we devote to private prayer at home or at Adoration. Devotional reading from the Bible or another appropriate book can be added. And don't forget the possibility of adding family devotions during Lent, so the whole family prays together.

When we offer our gold to Christ to build His Church and to help His poor, we are engaged in almsgiving. While giving from the treasure God has entrusted to us is a duty throughout the whole year, maybe this Lent we can prac-

tice being a little more generous than usual. If our giving is a thankful response to the gift of eternal life that God has given us, we will find that the giving is indeed a means of grace.

For centuries, myrrh has been associated with fasting. Although myrrh comes from the same family of plants as frankincense, it has a more pungent scent and bitter taste. In the ancient world, it was regularly used in embalming. Generations of theological writers have seen the gift of myrrh as a foreshadowing of Christ's

sufferings. And fasting strengthens us in holiness and prepares us to come into God's presence after our own deaths. St. Thomas Aquinas himself linked myrrh with repentance and fasting when he wrote that myrrh represents the penance by which we preserve our souls from the corruption of sin.

Fasting may be the most difficult of the three notable duties for modern Americans. After all, most of the adver-

tising and many of the magazine articles we see are devoted to making us more, not less, comfortable. We usually think of fasting only under the heading of dieting to lose weight. Instead, try to think of fasting as a way to become more spiritually fit. Body and spirit affect each other. The whole sacramental system is built on the truth that we can receive spiritual grace through material things and physical actions. Our specific requirements of fasting are limited — abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent, and a reduction in the quantity of food we eat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. But discipline of our physical bodies for our spiritual well-being does not have to be limited to Lent!

Gold, frankincense and myrrh were indeed valuable gifts for the wise men to present to the Child Jesus. When we look at their symbolism, we can see their relationship to the three notable duties of almsgiving, prayer and fasting. What gifts are we going to offer to Jesus this Lent?



A Look Back at Recent Parish Events

Our St. Peter's parish community enjoyed a busy start to 2014, with a host of activities and events taking place for parishioners of all ages. The Ministry Fair was held on Jan. 18 and 19, as members of our community learned about the many opportunities for service here at St. Peter's. Then on Jan. 24, our parish family shared in plenty of fun and fellowship at Pizza Bingo Night. And on Jan. 26, although it is not pictured below, we also had a very well-attended pancake breakfast which raised money to support our Workcamp mission trip coming up this summer. Thank you to everyone who made these events a success!



St. Peter

Church of St. Peter

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March and April Events at St. Peter's

New Parishioner Dinner
Saturday, March 1 at 6 p.m.

Fish Dinner
Friday, March 21, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Easter Vigil Mass
Saturday, April 19 at 8 p.m.

Confirmation Orientation
Sunday, March 2 at 10:15 a.m.

Parish Penance Service
Thursday, April 3, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Easter Sunday Mass
Sunday, April 20, 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

**Ash Wednesday –
Wednesday, March 5**
Masses at 7 a.m., 9 a.m., 7 p.m.

Workcamp Lenten Pasta Dinner
Friday, April 11, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

CCW Lenten Retreat
Saturday, March 22, 9 a.m.

Soup Supper
Wednesday, March 5 at 5 p.m.

The Mass of the Lord's Supper
Thursday, April 17 at 7 p.m.

First Holy Communion
Saturday, April 26 at 5 p.m.
Sunday, April 27 at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Stations of the Cross
Fridays of Lent at 7 p.m.

The Passion of Our Lord
Friday, April 18 at 7 p.m.

Divine Mercy Sunday Service
Sunday, April 27 at 1 p.m.

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