



St. Peter's Currents

In This Issue

Page 3

The Year of Faith is Underway

Page 4

Students Prepare for Christmas

Page 6

**Stewardship of Treasure
Giving to God First**

Page 7

**A Sense of Family
The Towle Family**

Page 8

Parish Events

Forward in Faith *Debt Reduction Campaign*

Our Parish – A Place We Call Our Spiritual Home

The Church of St. Peter plays a vital role in the lives of its members at various times and in various ways. For some, it is a constant role – attending daily Mass, or volunteering for church related projects. For others, it is an occasional role – attending Mass on a Holy Day, or finding sanctuary and solace in a familiar place at a vulnerable time in life. For many others, our parish plays a weekly role in our education and spiritual growth, and is central to our friendships and fellowship.

All of these roles are important. Our parish is here for us at all times – to provide a place for worship and wonder, consolation and celebration, forgiveness and fellowship, education and explanation, support and spiritual sustenance, contemplation and communion. Our individual and collective priority is to ensure the parish that nourishes our souls today retains its strength in perpetuity.



Our parish is here for us at all times - to provide a place for worship and wonder, consolation and celebration, forgiveness and fellowship, education and explanation...

continued on page 2

Forward in Faith *continued from front cover*

Our Challenges – Fund Mortgage Payments, Reduce Debt, Repair Facilities

St. Peter faces financial pressures just like all families. And the parish depends on each of our families for support. It's not enough to simply meet the ongoing ordinary needs of our church. We need to continue to retire our church mortgage with its burdensome interest payments, and responsibly care for the facilities that support our ministries. Accomplishing these priorities will not be possible with our regular operating income through the Sunday collections. Thus, ensuring the future vitality of our parish requires supplemental funds.

Our Solution – The Forward In Faith Capital Campaign

- Thanks to those households that have already offered their commitment.
- There is still time to offer your financial commitment to fund our principal and interest payments over the next three years, apply additional funds directly to our mortgage principal to reduce interest expense, repay archdiocesan assessments, and complete several deferred repairs and improvements in our facilities.
- Cards and envelopes can be found in the Gathering Space on the information counter, and in the parish office.
- Please complete your commitment, seal it in the confidential envelope, return it by mail, deliver it to the parish office, or place it in the collection basket.
- Follow up will continue until we have received a response from every household.



Annual Fall Festival a Hit with Parishioners

On Oct. 7, hundreds of parishioners and guests attended St. Peter's annual Fall Festival. All in attendance enjoyed delicious food, fun games, visiting with friends and more. Thanks to all who participated, all who attended, and especially to everyone who made this fun yearly tradition a success!



Having fun at the duck pond during St. Peter's fall festival, Oct. 7, 2012



Real men carve pigs!



Many parishioners and guests enjoyed the food and fellowship during the fall festival.

The Year of Faith is Underway

Dear Parishioners,

The Year of Faith, as proclaimed by Pope Benedict for the Church throughout the world to celebrate, began on Oct. 11 and will conclude Nov. 24 of next year, on the Feast of Christ the King.

The start of this Year of Faith coincided with the anniversaries of two great events in the life of the Church — the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) explains on its website, “The upcoming Year of Faith is a ‘summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the One Savior of the world’ (Pope Benedict XVI Apostolic Letter, *Porta Fidei* 6). In other words, the Year of Faith is an opportunity for Catholics to experience a conversion – to turn back to Jesus and enter into a deeper relationship with him. The ‘door of faith’ is opened at one’s baptism, but during this year Catholics are called to open it again, walk through it and rediscover and renew their relationship with Christ and his Church.”

The major themes of this special year are the very foundation of our faith. We focus on our belief in the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and in the Paschal Mystery, regarding the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus. We also seek a deeper personal encounter with Jesus, who is the light of faith. Finally, we make a renewed commitment to Mass and the Eucharist.



The Year of Faith is a time to reflect on the gift of our faith, and deepen our knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the Church. It is an opportunity to read, reflect and pray with the Scriptures, and to nourish and strengthen our faith through the Eucharist. It also is a time for us to help open the door of faith for others by caring for our neighbors.

Here in our parish, we will be offering many special opportunities for all of us to grow in our faith during this Year of Faith. Our series on the Vision of Vatican II for Today was very well received. Please keep an eye on the

bulletin for announcements on these opportunities and please take advantage of them. I promise that you will be glad you did.

If you would like to read and learn more about the Year of Faith, the USCCB website at www.usccb.org is an excellent resource. At the top of the home page under “Beliefs and Teachings,” click on “How We Teach,” then under “New Evangelization” click “Year of Faith.” Or you can go right to the Vatican’s Year of Faith website at www.annusfidei.va and click on the “EN” at the top to read the content in English.

With God’s grace, let us make this Year of Faith a season of great blessing for our parish, for our archdiocese and for the Church throughout the world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Joseph Gallatin
Pastor

The Year of Faith is a time to reflect on the gift of our faith, and deepen our knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the Church. It is an opportunity to read, reflect and pray with the Scriptures, and to nourish and strengthen our faith through the Eucharist. It also is a time for us to help open the door of faith for others by caring for our neighbors.

Faithful Shepherd Students

Christmas is a significant time for all Christians, and we must dutifully prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

“Jesus is our Lord, our Savior and our friend,” says Marla O’Keefe, who teaches first grade at Faithful Shepherd Catholic School. “He showed us the way to the Father. He is the center of our lives. Of course, his birth is very important in our lives.”

The season of Advent, leading up to Christmas, is certainly a very busy time as the students and teachers of Faithful Shepherd Catholic School prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord. Several Advent activities involve the entire school, but each class participates in their own individual activities, as well.

Mrs. O’Keefe’s students will be very active in their Advent preparations, as they learn about the meaning of Advent and its symbols from their text, *Blest Are We*. The students will then work on exercises in a special Advent packet, completing a few pages during each of the season’s four weeks. They will also construct a handmade wreath for their classroom door.

Each week of the season, the students will add a new paper flame to one of the four candles on their classroom Advent wreath, located at their prayer space. Every morning, the students will sing the Advent song, “Light the Ad-

vent Candle,” beginning their day in reflective preparation for Christ’s birth.

Mrs. O’Keefe’s students also complete a Forest of Good Deeds, in order to fully prepare their hearts for Jesus. Each child displays their own tree in the classroom, and every day of Advent, the students write a kind act or prayer that they will do for Jesus on the underside of a branch. By Christmas, each child will have a full tree for Jesus.

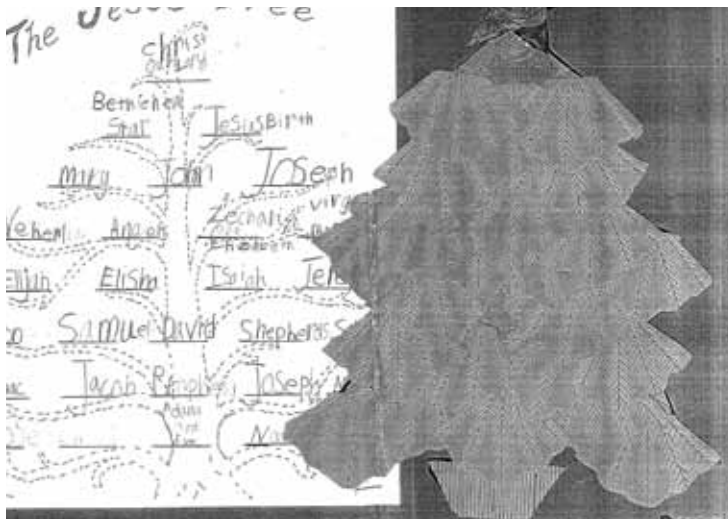
The Jesse Tree is another one of Mrs. O’Keefe’s special classroom activities. The students place a Jesse Tree in the hall outside the classroom door. Each day, they read about one of Christ’s ancestors, and the students write the names on their own personal Jesse Tree.

“The season of Advent is a time of waiting,” Mrs. O’Keefe says. “To help students understand that

mankind waited many, many years for our Savior, we do the Jesse Tree. Students learn about many people in Christ’s lineage who came before him, beginning with Creation. We end with the heliacal rising of the North Star and Christ’s birth. To help make this waiting a personal experience, every morning in Advent, students fill out a branch with some way they will prepare their hearts for Jesus’ birth. They write it on the back of the branch and glue it to their

“To help students understand that mankind waited many, many years for our Savior, we do the Jesse Tree. Students learn about many people in Christ’s lineage who came before him, beginning with Creation.”

– Marla O’Keefe, first-grade teacher



The Jesse Tree project helps first grade students at Faithful Shepherd prepare for Jesus’ birth



First graders display deer heads they made during last year’s Advent

nts Prepare for Christmas

tree. It is a secret covenant between Jesus and the child. By Christmas, they have a full forest of good deeds to offer Jesus and welcome him into their hearts.”

There are also several school-wide Advent activities at Faithful Shepherd. Students bring a dollar to donate to Feed My Starving Children on the second Friday of the month, and participate in an Advent service project. This project will serve our local community with a collection benefitting Moms and Neighbors, a group that identifies mothers and families in the local area and provides them with anonymous gestures of kindness — both financial and through a network of services.

All of these special activities help to prepare the children for the coming of Jesus, giving them a greater understanding of the true meanings of Advent and Christmas.

“It’s a way of showing the liturgical seasons and being specific about them for the kids,” says Principal Terese Shimshock. “When we say it’s for Advent, they understand the timing of it. It’s a good way to model that for our kids.”



Students happily prepare food at the Feed My Starving Children event



(Above) Students listen to instructions during the Feed My Starving Children event

Stewardship of Treasure

Giving to God First

Have you ever wondered why no one really becomes uneasy when someone brings up the first two “Ts” of stewardship — giving of your time or talents — but when the third “T” comes up, many of us become uncomfortable?

That third “T” is treasure, and some people simply become so annoyed by the subject, they tune out the words from the pulpit.

Why is there seemingly such an adverse reaction?

Our finances are such a personal subject. Discussing money issues with others is not easy, and having someone tell us what to do with our finances is even worse. We earn the money, after all. So shouldn't we decide what to do with it?

Of course, the answer is “yes” — we decide every day how to spend our hard-earned dollars. Indeed, the monetary choices we make will either keep our finances in check, or put us into the red. The average American family has about \$7,000 in credit card debt — so finances certainly represent a challenge to our current society. Tight budgets, trying to keep up with the “Joneses” or poor financial management may be to blame for our tight resources. Does this mean we do not have anything left over for God?

Stewardship, at its roots, teaches that we are not supposed to give God



our “leftovers.” We should instead strive to return to God a portion of our “first fruits” — giving to God first and then using the rest for our other needs. God gave us our talents that help us earn a living, after all. He should come first.

This idea can be worrisome for many. If our finances are already strained, how will we ever find enough give back to God? Or, if we do try to give God our “first fruits,” will there be enough left over to cover our required expenses?

Taking the correct financial steps toward good stewardship simply boils down to trust — believing that God, who takes care of all of His creation, will take care of us. Trust that in giving to God first, we are both acknowledging that our multitude of blessings come from Him, and that we are thankful He chose to give them to us. And finally, trust that if we give to Him first, that all else will fall into place — because He is in ultimate control.

Stewardship, at its roots, teaches that we are not supposed to give God our “leftovers.” We should instead strive to return to God a portion of our “first fruits” – giving to God first and then using the rest for our other needs.

A Sense of Family The Towle Family

There are many reasons to take that first step and get involved in your parish. For Joe and Linda Towle, their inspiration was their family.

“It was mostly our children,” Linda says. “We wanted to really acclimate them into parish life. It started as becoming active as Religious Education teachers. That way, we met a lot of families. It was a really good way to get to know people and feel at home there. That’s why we initially got involved. And after that, it becomes your family.”

Joe and Linda have been members of St. Peter for around 20 years, and they are very active in our parish and in the community. They both started by teaching Religious Education at the parish when their children began going through the courses.

Joe and Linda have five children — two are grown, one recently graduated high school, and two are still at home. The family members have shared their talent

with our parish in a number of ways over the years, and continue to do so today.

In addition to teaching Religious Education, Joe served as an usher for several years. Linda worked for the parish as the Senior High religious coordinator for about three years, and as the Parish Life coordinator for another year. For the past two years, Linda has also taught a fitness class for seniors called Faithfully Fit Forever.

“It keeps you connected,” Linda says. “Everybody is gifted so differently — we’re all given different gifts. In order for it to be the best it can be, we all need to use our God-given gifts to make it the best possible parish. We’re all so different, that’s the thing. And I know that there have been opportunities to do different things that my skills don’t meet, but I know that there are other people that do, and I love that they step up. It makes the whole atmosphere so much richer.”

Through all of the ways that Linda, Joe and their family have contributed their

time and talents to the parish community, they have grown closer to our parish family.

“Your involvement in a parish keeps you grounded,” Linda says. “It’s a sense of belonging and a sense of community. I think that’s essential for people. It makes your spiritual life richer, and more powerful and deeper — the sense of belonging and sense of caring and other people you worship with. I’ve watched families grow up. The kids that I taught in Sunday school have graduated and are starting families of their own. It’s a family. It’s a sense of belonging.”

That sense of family and belonging is one that Linda wants to share.

“I’m very emotionally attached to our parish, and I’m blessed to be a part of it,” Linda says. “That would be my hope, that everyone found that sense of belonging and be at home in their parish. That would be my wish for anybody who’s considering joining the parish, that they could have the experience I have had there.”



Church of St. Peter

1405 Highway 13, PO Box 50679 | Mendota, MN 55150
(651) 452-4550 | www.stpetersmendota.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Twin Cities MN
Permit No. 5000

Parish Events

Empowering Couples: A Married Couples' Retreat

Nov. 9, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., and Nov. 10, 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

First Reconciliation

Nov. 29 at 6:30 p.m.

Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women

Advent Retreat

Dec. 1, 8:30 a.m. to noon

First Reconciliation

Dec. 1 at 1 p.m.

Partners in Praise Concert

Dec. 1 at 7 p.m.

Giving Tree sorting and lunch

Dec. 9

Workcamp Bake Sale

Dec. 15 and 16 after all Masses

Youth Group Christmas Party

Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Advent Parish Penance Service

Dec. 20 at 7 p.m.

Children's Christmas Pageant

Dec. 23 at 10 a.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