



St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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IN THE FACE OF CURRENT CHALLENGES,

CATECHISTS PLANT SEEDS THROUGH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Catholic speaker and author Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers once said that when it comes to faith formation, sometimes you have to plant the seeds and then get out of the way. Parish Coordinator of Religious Education Judy Kreczmer says this is Religious Education in a nutshell.

“We try to look at everything we do as planting seeds,” Judy says. “So much of what we do is unseen and unmeasurable.”

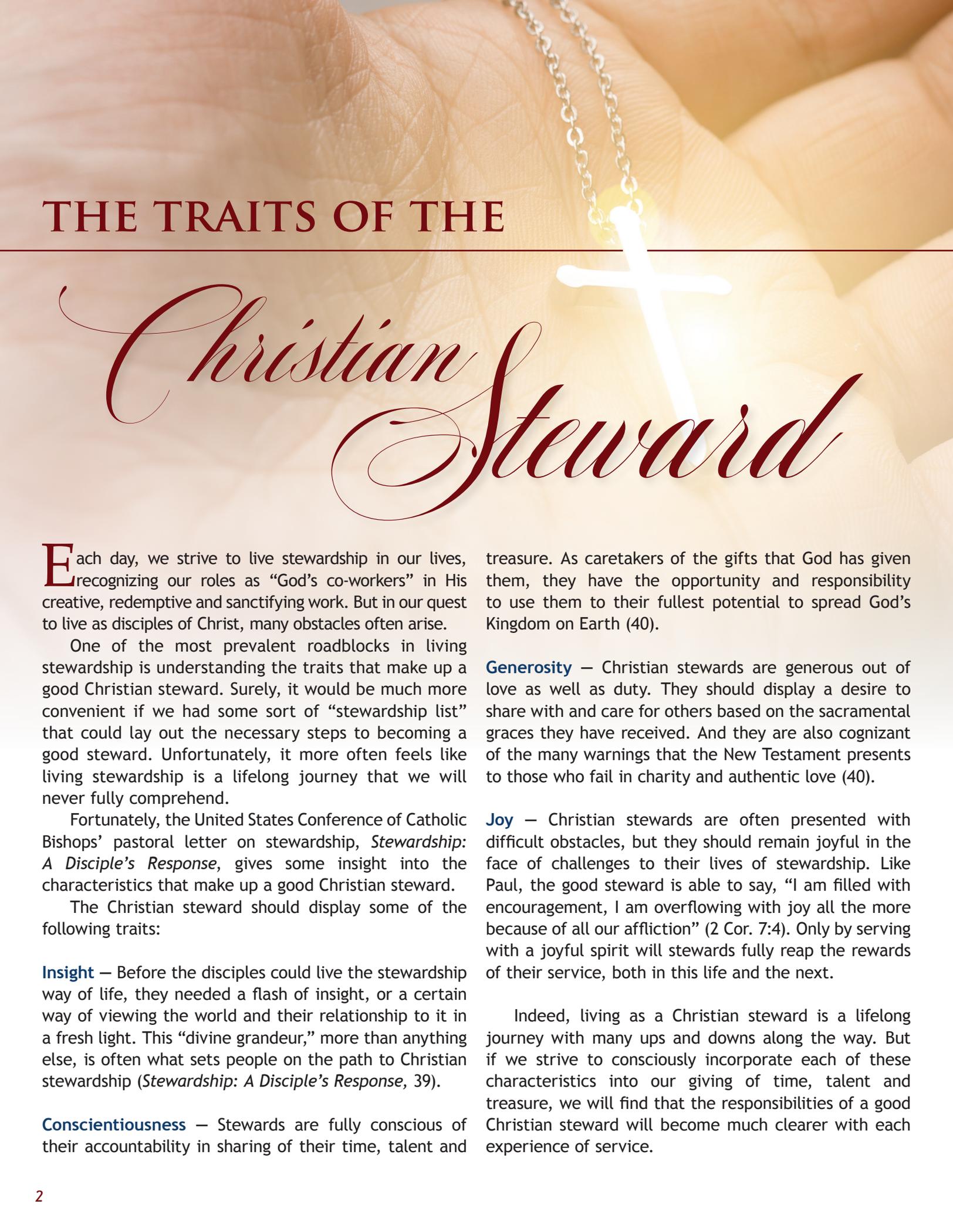
“We’re trying to not just have them memorize prayers or the Ten Commandments,” adds Religious Education Administrative Assistant Lisa Short. “It’s more about helping them have that personal



relationship with Christ and teaching them to live out the faith.”

This concept of seed-planting has become more prevalent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As they could no longer gather for their traditional 9 a.m. Sunday classes, catechists were pushed to get creative, finding new ways to present the faith and support the parents as their children’s primary educators. From Google Meet classes and weekly Flocknote messages, to entirely new methods of instruction, St. John the Baptist’s catechetical team was pushed to think in entirely new ways as they closed out the 2019-20 school year.

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THE TRAITS OF THE

Christian Steward

Each day, we strive to live stewardship in our lives, recognizing our roles as “God’s co-workers” in His creative, redemptive and sanctifying work. But in our quest to live as disciples of Christ, many obstacles often arise.

One of the most prevalent roadblocks in living stewardship is understanding the traits that make up a good Christian steward. Surely, it would be much more convenient if we had some sort of “stewardship list” that could lay out the necessary steps to becoming a good steward. Unfortunately, it more often feels like living stewardship is a lifelong journey that we will never fully comprehend.

Fortunately, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, gives some insight into the characteristics that make up a good Christian steward.

The Christian steward should display some of the following traits:

Insight – Before the disciples could live the stewardship way of life, they needed a flash of insight, or a certain way of viewing the world and their relationship to it in a fresh light. This “divine grandeur,” more than anything else, is often what sets people on the path to Christian stewardship (*Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, 39).

Conscientiousness – Stewards are fully conscious of their accountability in sharing of their time, talent and

treasure. As caretakers of the gifts that God has given them, they have the opportunity and responsibility to use them to their fullest potential to spread God’s Kingdom on Earth (40).

Generosity – Christian stewards are generous out of love as well as duty. They should display a desire to share with and care for others based on the sacramental graces they have received. And they are also cognizant of the many warnings that the New Testament presents to those who fail in charity and authentic love (40).

Joy – Christian stewards are often presented with difficult obstacles, but they should remain joyful in the face of challenges to their lives of stewardship. Like Paul, the good steward is able to say, “I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy all the more because of all our affliction” (2 Cor. 7:4). Only by serving with a joyful spirit will stewards fully reap the rewards of their service, both in this life and the next.

Indeed, living as a Christian steward is a lifelong journey with many ups and downs along the way. But if we strive to consciously incorporate each of these characteristics into our giving of time, talent and treasure, we will find that the responsibilities of a good Christian steward will become much clearer with each experience of service.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Welcome Back, Welcome Home!

Dear Parishioners,

To those of you who have been actively participating in the life of our parish but have been forced to stay away due to the COVID-19 pandemic, welcome home!

To those of you who haven't been to church in years and decided to renew your faith, welcome back, and welcome home!

During these past few months, we have experienced some of the most challenging and unnerving times in the history of our nation and Church. As we start to emerge from the darkness of this crisis and return to Mass and parish activities and ministries, I feel blessed and excited.

Excited to see familiar faces.

Excited to see new faces.

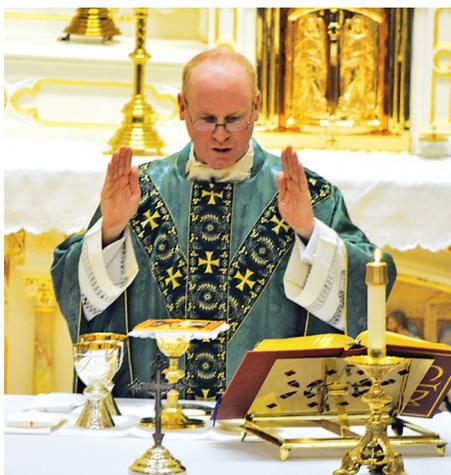
Excited to see faces of those we haven't seen in a while but decided to come back!

In times like these, when nothing seems to make sense, I am so very glad you are here. The timing of your return is perfect, because the truth is we need Christ now more than ever.

Whether you have simply been forced to stay away while public Masses were canceled, or if you have been away from the Church for many years, this crisis has changed us.

All of us.

We have had some extra time lately for introspection. For personal reflection. And for prayer. And perhaps during this era of isolation and social distancing, you have found yourself yearning for Christ more than



ever before in the hopes of finding some meaning to all of this.

You have come to the right place.

As you walk through our doors for the first time in months – or perhaps even years – I hope you see the face of Christ in myself and in all those around you. I hope you find a welcoming parish family there to greet you, overjoyed by your return.

As Christ tells us, from Matthew's Gospel, "For I was a stranger, you welcomed me" (Mt. 25:35).

The truth is, there really are no strangers at our parish. So as you come back home to our parish, I hope and pray you experience that same spirit of kindness and hospitality from all your fellow parishioners.

Whether you're a longtime parishioner, or someone who fell away from the Catholic Church and are now ready to become renewed in the faith, let us all remember to welcome all who enter our parish doors with open arms, smiling faces and a servant's heart.

By living out our calling as Christian stewards, we will all emerge from this dark time as a community of faith that is stronger than ever – together.

Welcome back. And welcome home.

In Christ,

Fr. Butler
Fr. Butler, Pastor

St. John the Baptist

FINDING GOD'S PLAN

The past several months have changed much about the way we live our lives, from the way we shop for groceries, to the way we communicate with our loved ones and the way we worship. For many Catholics, this has perhaps been the longest time they have gone without participating in Sunday liturgy or other parish events, in person. However, here at St. John the Baptist, it has also been an opportunity for us to expand the ways that we connect with our parishioners, as well as evangelize our broader community.

"I keep coming back to the analogy of God's 'pause button' on the world," says Fr. Butler. "Who would've ever thought that the whole world could come to a stop? What's the reason that God allows this evil to happen? God allows evil that better good will come out of it. My hope is that this is bringing people back."

As soon as the celebration of public Masses was canceled, Fr. Butler began to offer livestreamed Masses — an 8 a.m. daily Mass, a 5 p.m. Saturday Mass and a 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass.

He also offered a livestream Eucharistic Holy Hour each evening at 6 p.m. Fr. Butler

also decided to offer the Sacrament of Confession, outdoors, in the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, between the church and rectory.

Members of the Pastoral Council reached out to our older parishioners, making over 119 phone calls to connect with members of our community who are over the age of 70. Fr. Butler visited some people outside of their homes, bringing the Eucharist in a monstrance to bless them, and on Mother's Day, he offered a special drive-through blessing for over 50 mothers and their families, in our community.

Although processions have been a regular part of our parish's celebrations for a number of years, they took on particular significance these past several months, bringing our faith out into the communities that were unable to come to us. On May 13, for the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, Fr. Butler did a Marian procession with the Our Lady of Fatima statue, for three miles, all around Somonauk. On June 14, the feast of Corpus Christi, he celebrated with a Eucharistic procession, following the same route throughout town.

"Pope Gregory the Great, when he had a major pandemic in Rome, processed throughout the



"What do they say? 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder.' It's not ideal, but maybe this is part of God's plan, to have this time to get our attention. Our culture needs conversion — it needs Jesus."

— FR. BUTLER

IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19

city with the Blessed Mother statue and the pandemic ended pretty quickly after that,” Fr. Butler says. With our processions we’re praying that COVID will end, for the development of an ethical vaccine, healing for anyone who has the virus, and conversion of the faithful.

“I believe that the solution isn’t so much in our scientists – they’re important – but more in our prayer,” he adds. “Don’t be afraid. Have faith. God is going to carry us through.”

The ability to connect through technology has also been a blessing as a number of groups – including our Pastoral Council, Finance Council and staff – have held meetings by Zoom video conference. Our religious education programs, Confirmation preparation classes, and Y-Disciple youth ministry also continued to meet via Zoom. Periodic phone blasts and parish-wide emails have also allowed us to keep our parishioners updated on parish news and special opportunities.

On Pentecost Sunday, St. John the Baptist opened for the celebration of public Masses, with the number of people allowed to attend slowly increasing, based on state and diocesan guidelines. More information on changes, as well as the Mass sign-up, can be found on our parish website. Fr. Butler encourages parishioners to begin returning to Mass as soon as they are able.

“Do not be afraid,” Fr. Butler says. “We’re taking all the precautions and things have improved so much with the virus. Our faith is so important and it’s so important that we come back together.

Fr. Butler plans to expand our efforts to share our faith in the community, whether by the sign out on the street advertising outdoor Confessions and livestreamed Mass, or our processions through town.

We will also be working with St. Paul Street Evangelization and Ascension Press’ program, *The 99*, to increase our impact.

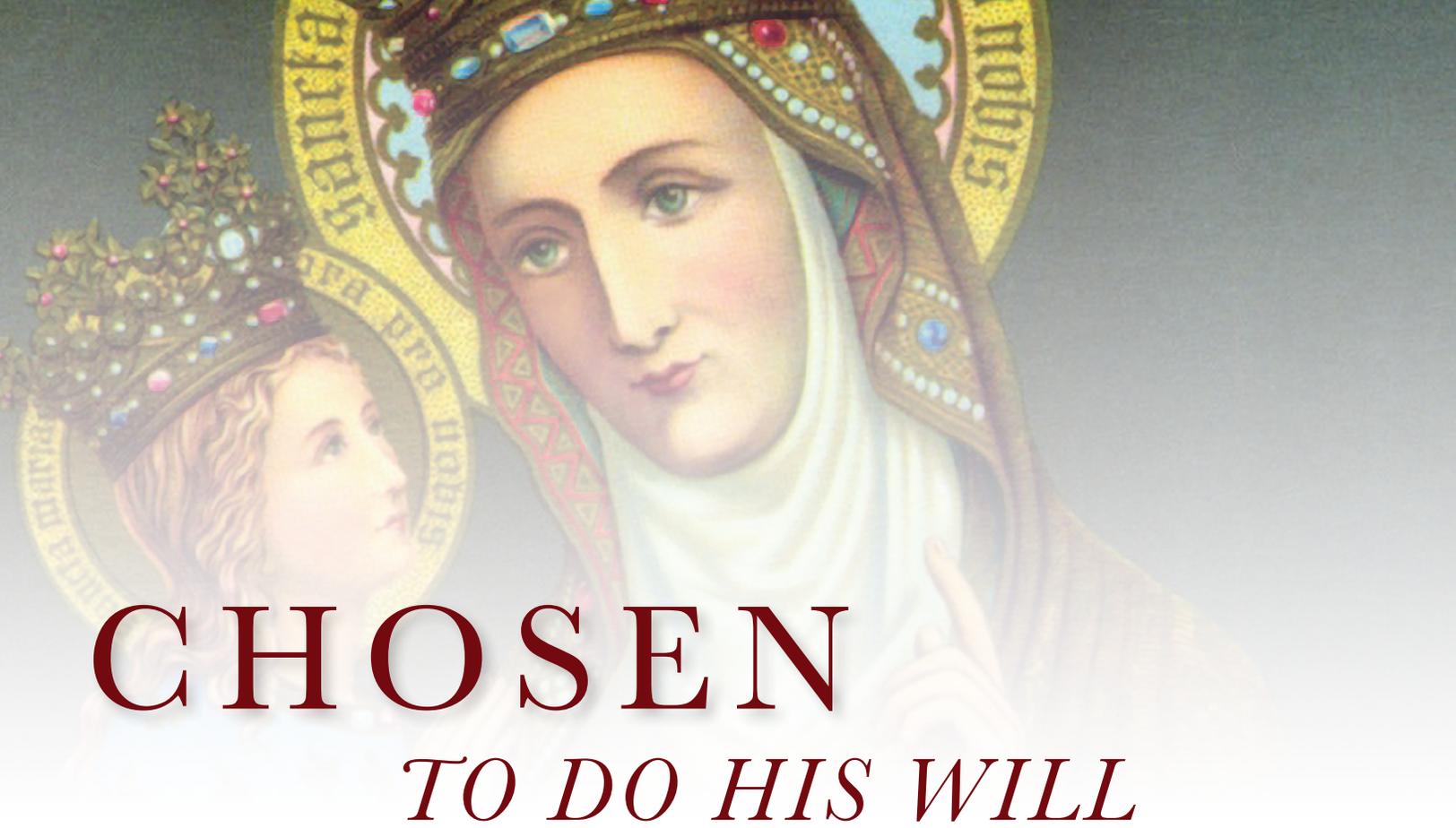
“The government often wants to push us away, ‘Keep your faith to yourself, stay in your church,’ but now, now we had to come out of our church, and it’s a time of evangelization,” Fr. Butler says.

“During this time, people are actually experiencing conversion, asking ‘What’s the purpose in life?’” he adds. “Now’s the time to evangelize, to get out there, with lots of energy.”

So, while things are slowly moving into a “new normal,” Fr. Butler hopes that the positive changes we made throughout the course of the pandemic will remain part of our community and way of life.

“What do they say? ‘Absence makes the heart grow fonder,’” Fr. Butler says. “It’s not ideal, but maybe this is part of God’s plan, to have this time to get our attention. Our culture needs conversion – it needs Jesus.”

Please visit our new website for more information on upcoming events and changes — www.stjbsom.org. In order to allow parishioners to continue supporting our parish’s mission, a secure door slot has been installed in the parish office door for Sunday envelopes. Parishioners may also give by texting the word “Sunday” to 815-205-0260 or visiting stjbsom.org/giving.



CHOOSE

TO DO HIS WILL

THE FEAST OF ST. ANNE — JULY 26

Did you know that St. Anne is the patron saint of miners? In medieval times, the Virgin Mary and Jesus were often compared to precious metals of silver and gold. Hence, the lives that came from the womb of St. Anne made her the source of precious riches.

Unlike Mary, St. Anne was not conceived without sin – but nevertheless, she would one day raise the Mother of God. That’s a pretty big deal! What was it about St. Anne that prompted God to give her such a significant role in the history of salvation? There’s no way to know for sure, but there is one thing we can definitely say about St. Anne – God uses those who put themselves at His service, and that is precisely what St. Anne did.

Not much is mentioned about St. Anne in the Bible, but her name derives from the longer name “Hannah,” or the Hebrew word for “grace.” We understand that, having believed herself to be barren for 20 years, an angel appeared to Anne and told her that she would soon have a daughter that she should name Mary.

When Mary was finally born, after many years of frustration and infertility on her parents’ part, Anne

did just as she promised – she dedicated Mary to the Lord, and raised a holy woman who would mother Christ Himself!

Early Christians are said to have been very intrigued by the story of Jesus’ grandmother and, around the year 550, erected a church in Jerusalem where St. Anne, her husband, Joachim, and Mary are said to have lived.

Although we do not know much more about St. Anne, we can assume that she was a very holy woman based upon the woman her daughter, Mary, grew to be. Anne was the one from whom Mary learned to be a mother. She was the one from whom Mary learned to serve God. She was the one who instilled in Mary the confidence and faith to say “yes” to God – “May it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

There is no doubt that St. Anne was a humble, holy woman. She was given a great gift – a child – who she readily gave back to God. And, thanks to her faith-filled gratitude to God for His gift, Mary opened her heart to the will of God, and became the mother of Christ.

Talk about stewardship in action!

Adult Altar Servers Pitch in to Help Our Mass Run Smoothly

“I have gotten to know many people over the years that I would not have had a chance to really get to know. Working on a project or ministry helps to break the ice. We bond and get to know each other’s family, careers and more.” — Chuck Hickey

Thanks to a group of five men, there’s always an extra set of hands at our daily Masses.

“I think of it as God asking me to help,” says Chuck Hickey, an altar server at St. John the Baptist.

In 2004, Chuck retired from teaching and started attending daily Mass. Fr. DeSalvo asked him to get involved as an altar server – and ever since, he’s been serving this ministry for daily Mass and funerals. With the help of the other servers Bud Short, Craig Zuege, Chris Wegener and Brad Strever, each person serves at about one daily Mass per week.

Adult servers assist during Mass, as well as light the candles and make sure the wine and water are on the cruet table before Mass. On special dates, they light the charcoal for adoration. They also are a big help when a visiting priest says Mass.

Chuck was also an altar server through his childhood until he graduated from high school.

“My parents always stressed to us that everyone needs to do their part,” he says. “I feel like I’m doing God’s calling,” Chuck says.

Chuck feels he has received many blessings through serving as an adult altar server. He and his wife, Linda, and daughter, Julia, have grown in faith

through this ministry. He has also appreciated getting to know our parish priests and others in our St. John the Baptist faith community.

“I have gotten to know many people over the years that I would not have had a chance to really get to know,” he says. “Working on a project or ministry helps to break the ice. We bond and get to know each other’s family, careers and more.”

Chuck invites any male parishioner who is available for daily Mass at 7 a.m. or 5 p.m. to become an altar server. He appreciates that at a small parish like ours, everyone pitches in to make Mass run smoothly.

“Serving in a ministry allows different people to get involved in our parish,” he says. “It makes them feel a sense of belonging.”

If you would like to learn more about becoming an adult altar server, please call Chuck Hickey at 815-826-1199.



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Somonauk, IL 60552
Phone: 815-498-2010
www.stjbsom.org

Return Service Requested

Mass Times

Saturdays 5:00 p.m.
Sundays 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.
Weekdays:
Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.
M, W, Th, F 7:00 a.m.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Tuesdays 5:00 p.m.
Saturdays 4:00 p.m.
or by appointment

Adoration

Tuesdays 5-6 p.m. and
First Fridays 7:30 a.m.-9:00 p.m.
with Benediction 9:00 p.m.

Catechists *continued from front cover*

“Though definitely not an ideal situation, I certainly feel it has strengthened our partnership with the parents,” Judy says. “I feel truly, truly blessed, too, to have the best group of people to work with. Our catechists go above and beyond and they love the kids so much. It’s amazing to watch how these relationships come together.”

As the situation with the pandemic continues to evolve, Judy and her team are still uncertain what the 2020-21 Religious Education year will look like. That doesn’t mean, however, that they can’t begin to make plans, seeking to grow and improve in whatever ways possible.

“Right now, I’m hoping for the absolute best, which is that we go back to Religious Education the way it was before, only improved,” Judy says. “I’ve heard back from all our catechists and all but one are coming back. They all want to stay with their same classes. We’ve also already looked at textbooks, activities and a tentative schedule.”

“The books we are looking at are flexible,” Lisa adds. “They can be used either remotely or in person.”

Judy and Lisa also hope to be able to continue other larger Religious Education gatherings, such as the monthly

Sunday Children’s Mass at 10:30, and opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Stations of the Cross. All of this is done with the intention of planting and nurturing those seeds, forming the children in the faith from as early of an age as possible so that it can flourish and take root in their hearts.

“I personally believe that the sooner we can talk to the kids about Jesus, God, our religion and what makes being Catholic different than any other religion, the better,” Judy says. “We’re also trying to encourage parents to become as involved as possible in that process, whether that means coming out for a Family Fun Day, sitting in on a class, or attending an adult faith formation opportunity.”

If you would like more information about the 2020-21 Religious Education year and registration, please visit the parish website at www.stjbsom.org/religious-education, or contact Judy Kreczmer at 815-353-6562 or re@stjbsom.org.