



St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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PARISHIONER Jeff Weseman

Makes the Pilgrimage of a Lifetime

An Opportunity to Walk in the Steps of Our Lord, Peter and St. John

Walking the way of our Catholic faith means journeying with Jesus and His disciples through Scripture. In our daily lives, this means loving our neighbors and seeking to be a light in the world. Following Jesus means striving to live our ordinary lives in extraordinary ways. But sometimes we have opportunities to follow Him in even larger, more significant ways.



Parishioner Jeff Weseman recently had the opportunity to follow Jesus in a very hands-on way, as he embarked upon a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Parishioner Jeff Weseman recently had the opportunity to follow Jesus in a very hands-on way, as he embarked upon a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and visited many of the sites

where Our Lord walked during His time on earth.

"It was, for me, the trip of a lifetime to be able to immerse myself in the Gospels," Jeff says.

Jeff's travels took him all around Jordan, to see where Moses received the tablets with the Ten Commandments, to visit the Wailing Wall, and to visit Petra, one of the world's seven wonders. Jeff also went to Israel, where he saw the Promised Land and the tomb within the

Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which was one highlight of the pilgrimage for him. But for Jeff, the ultimate highlight of the trip was seeing Jesus' tomb.

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Corpus Christi Procession *Bringing Jesus into Our Community*

*We thank all who participated in the Corpus Christi Procession
as we brought the Real Presence of Jesus into our community.*



A Letter From Our Pastor

Much Will Be *Required* of the Person *Entrusted* with Much

Dear Parishioners,

No matter your situation in life, chances are there is someone out there who has more than you. Too often we may hesitate to follow stewardship as a way of life because we are waiting for someone more blessed than we are to show us the way.

You may be aware that the Scripture readings we hear at each Mass are part of a three-year cycle. In general, the Gospel passages in Cycle A are from Matthew; Cycle B is principally Mark; and Cycle C, the year we are now in, is primarily from Luke. John is mixed in and especially used during Lent. We are in what might be called a “Luke year.”

As we hear the Gospels from Luke, we need to be acutely aware of the stewardship messages found there. In one recent Gospel passage from Luke, Jesus uses a parable to remind us of an important stewardship lesson. He precedes the parable by reminding us all, “Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions” (Luke 12:15). You and I both know that God does not judge us based upon what we may have accumulated during our lifetimes, but based upon how we lived those lives, and especially how we used those gifts – those possessions.

The parable focuses on a “rich man” who builds larger grain bins to store his abundant harvests. God calls the man a fool and reminds him that growing rich for himself is not as important as growing rich in the sight of God. The very next week (the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time), Luke again tells us how Jesus warns and cautions His disciples – “For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (Luke 12:34). The Lord warns them that they do not know what day or what hour He will return and summarizes it all with another important insight into



what is expected of us – “Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more” (Luke 12:48).

You see, we are not “off the hook” if someone else has more gifts but fails to use them well. Stewardship demands that each of us use our gifts, and each of us is gifted whether we want to admit it or not, to serve God and others. Luke’s implied stewardship messages come full circle in the Gospel reading on Aug. 21 – “For

behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last” (Luke 13:30).

That admonition from the Lord has always seemed a bit confusing. It more or less says that to be first, we need to be last, and if we are first, we may be last. I think perhaps all of these messages, including the first and last one, are cautions to us that we cannot be complacent and we cannot take salvation and holiness for granted. We need to work on them. We are not measured by our possessions; God indeed does expect a lot of us, no matter how small or extensive our gifts may be. Regardless of how holy we may strive to be, it is God who will judge; it is by His grace that we will be saved.

Amid all these magnificent stewardship messages, we celebrate the Assumption of our Blessed Mother on Aug. 15 – “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant” (Luke 1:46-48). God bless you all!

In Christ,

Fr. Butler
Fr. Butler, Pastor

St. John the Baptist

VBS and C

Helping Kids Encounter Christ



June was a busy and exciting month for the youth here at St. John the Baptist Parish. There were two programs offered throughout the month – Vacation Bible School and Camp WOW – that allowed our young parishioners to learn about their faith, grow spiritually, and meet new friends.

VBS was held from June 20-24. The theme this year was “Monumental Totally Catholic VBS.” Lisa Short assisted the Coordinator of Religious Education in planning VBS and was present during the whole program. Lisa had the wonderful opportunity to watch the children grow throughout the week.

“Watching the kids grow and open up as the week progressed was my favorite part of the week,” Lisa says. “Many kids arrived nervous the first day, but by the end of the week they knew the routine, met new friends, and the nervousness was gone. The excitement and energy were phenomenal and it was great seeing the little kids connect with their leaders.”

By the end of the week, 27 kids were attending VBS. In addition to the children who attended the program, there were eight middle school and high school students who volunteered to help with the kids and three women who worked in the kitchen to prepare snacks and lunch.

The kids participated in a series of activities, including songs, Bible adventures, games, viewing inspiring videos that featured kids just like them, and a chance to learn about saints. Kids attended Mass on Monday-Wednesday, they toured the church on Thursday and prayed the Rosary on Friday. The week ended with some water fun!

“They learned a ton while having fun and making new friends,” Lisa says. “It was great seeing all of the kids come together and connect with each other.

The other program held in June was a four-day/three-night camp called Camp WOW. This program

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Camp WOW

and Build New Friendships

was held from June 5-8 at Covenant Harbor in Lake Geneva, Wis. St. John the Baptist Parish had seven campers from sixth to eighth grades attend, as well as four high school counselors. Camp WOW is made up of seven different parishes, so in total there were 70 campers, 23 counselors, and seven youth ministers who participated.

For each day of Camp WOW, everyone gathered together in the morning for praise and worship, listened to a talk and witness by the counselors, and then the attendees split into small groups to discuss the talks and go on their rotation of activities.

The students had the opportunity to participate in many activities, including canoeing, a climbing tower, and zip line, a low-ropes challenge course, archery, gym, Wacky Olympics, adoration, and a “no-talent” talent show. In addition, Mass was held daily and there was an opportunity for kids to go to confession.

“It was an amazing experience for everyone,” Lisa says. “I think they all expected to have a good time doing the recreational activities, but having a moving experience during the spiritual parts was the icing on the cake. Camp allowed the kids to stretch themselves and conquer what they may have thought was impossible. They were able to try new things in a safe and supportive environment.”



If you have any questions about either of these programs that were held in June, please contact Lisa Short at 815-498-2010, ext. 103 or lisashort@stjbsom.org.

St. John the Baptist

Stewardship's "Supreme Teacher" *Following Christ's Example*

Former President and Five-Star General Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "You don't lead by hitting people over the head – that's assault, not leadership." President Eisenhower's words are both blunt and humorous, but he makes a great point. Almost any successful endeavor in life requires the benefit of strong leadership. And a truly effective leader does not lead by simply telling others what to do, but by providing a strong example of how to carry oneself on a daily basis.

This is no different for us in our lives as Catholic Christians. As individuals who face numerous difficult choices every day, we require a leader who, through word *and* example, can show us the path to living according to God's will. For us, Jesus is the supreme teacher of every aspect of Christian life, and His life as documented in the Gospels is a model that we should strive to imitate in living as good Christians. And as we have learned, stewardship – the sharing of the gifts that God has given to us – is a big part of Christian life, and one for which Jesus left many examples of successful living.

Jesus' nature of selfless service, documented many times throughout the New Testament and culminating with His death for our sins, is an underlying aspect of living the stewardship way of life. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops points out in its

pastoral document *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, "In Jesus' teaching and life self-emptying is fundamental. Now, it might seem that self-emptying has little to do with stewardship, but in Jesus' case, that is not so. His self-emptying is not sterile self-denial for its own sake; rather, in setting aside self, he is filled with the Father's will, and he is fulfilled in just this way" (19).

Jesus points out to Peter in Mark's Gospel that this "self-emptying" requires sacrifice, but ultimately leads to "eternal life in the age to come" (Mk 10:30). But the Christian steward's ultimate reward is not his or her only benefit from living the stewardship way of life. By sharing of our time, talent, and treasure, and living in imitation of Christ, we can relate more closely to Him in sharing, in a small way, in His sacrifice. "To be a Christian disciple is a rewarding way of life, a way of companionship with Jesus, and the practice of stewardship as a part of it is itself a source of deep joy. Those who live this way are happy people who have found the meaning and purpose of living" (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 21).

The next time you are frustrated or unsure of how to best respond to God's gifts in stewardship, take a moment to open up the Bible. Jesus may not "hit us over the head" in His leadership, but He does provide numerous examples through His actions and teachings of how to live as one of His disciples.



Cemetery Sunday

Prayerfully Honoring Members of Our Faith Family Who Have Gone Before Us

At Mass, we pray for those who have recently passed with the Prayer for the Faithful Departed – “Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.”

Our prayers for the deceased must go beyond this prayer. That’s why Cemetery Sunday has been happening for approximately 100 years here at St. John the Baptist. Those who have gone before us still need our prayers. So, parishioners and those with family members buried in the parish cemetery grab their lawn chairs and gather each year on the first Sunday in June. Fr. Butler believes this event is essential for all of us and the faithfully departed.

This year, about 40 people gathered to pray. Everyone is blessed with holy water, and they pray a Rosary together. The trees in the center of the cemetery provide a perfect shady spot. Fr. Butler reminds us that we need to take the time to pray for the deceased, which is something our culture doesn’t do.

“The souls of the faithfully departed need our prayers,” he says. “Cemetery Sunday gives us a chance to connect with those that

have gone before us and to pray in our cemetery.”

Fr. Butler enjoys the closeness that attendees feel. It can be a time of powerful prayer.

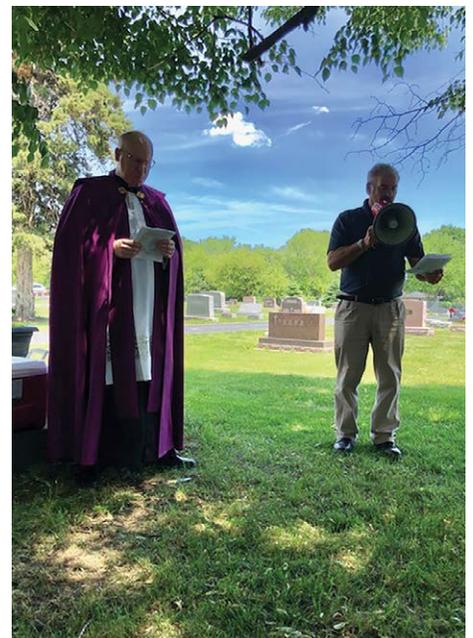
“People who attend really enjoy it,” Fr. Butler says. “It is special to come together to pray for our deceased.”

Pat Werner enjoys Cemetery Sunday and believes it’s a great way to show respect for those who have passed away. Dick Meyer has many family members buried in the cemetery, including several sisters and brothers. He believes it’s an important event to honor the deceased, while also catching up and reminiscing with friends and family.

As Bud Short puts it, Cemetery Sunday is ultimately a day to honor our family and parish friends who have passed away.

“I like that Cemetery Sunday is an opportunity to remember and honor not only our family members that have gone before us, but also my friends from the parish that have passed,” he says.

“We are a parish family,” Fr. Butler says. “If we have loved ones or parishioners that have gone before us, it is so important to come together in the cemetery to pray. And it is extra special to be there to pray together.”



Cemetery Sunday has been happening for approximately 100 years here at St. John the Baptist. This year, about 40 people gathered to pray.



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Mass Times

Saturdays – 5 p.m.
Sundays – 8 and 11 a.m.
Weekdays – Mon-Fri 8 a.m.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri – 6-7 p.m.
Saturdays – 4 p.m. or by
appointment

Adoration

Mon-Fri – 6-7 p.m.

Parishioner Jeff Weseman *continued from front cover*

“The best part for me was visiting where Jesus was laid after His death and kissing the stone which lay upon the site,” Jeff says.

Going to the Holy Land was far more than just a vacation or holiday trip for Jeff – taking a pilgrimage somewhere and going on vacation are two very different things. Vacationing might include booking tours and sightseeing for the sake of memories and photos, whereas a pilgrimage involves going to a holy and sacred place. In Jeff’s case, this meant walking the way of the Gospel along with a guide.

While there are many holy places around the world where one could take a pilgrimage, Jeff chose the Holy Land for a specific reason.

“I wanted to walk in the steps of Our Lord, Peter and St. John,” he says.

Jeff experienced some incredible moments while on his pilgrimage. He had the opportunity to attend daily Mass – including one Mass in the tomb

where Jesus ascended to heaven. He also walked the way of the Stations of the Cross and learned to understand the circumstances under which Our Lord was born.

“I loved the daily inspirational walks while reliving the Old and New Testaments,” Jeff says.

To anyone who is considering going on a pilgrimage, Jeff recommends going with an open mind and investing in walking shoes, given the extensive amount of activity and time spent walking around.

“It was, for me, the trip of a lifetime to be able to immerse myself in the Gospels.”

— JEFF WESEMAN
