



St. John the Baptist

CATHOLIC CHURCH

In this Issue:

- 3 If Not Stewards, Then What Are We?
- 4 Our Annual Stewardship Renewal
- 6 The Importance of Catholic Faith Formation
- 7 Daily Mass Attendance Offers a Valuable Chance to Grow in Christ and Community

Getting to Know

FOCUS Missionary Keith Mokry

Serving as an Instrument in God's Good Hands

While serving as president of his fraternity at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Keith Mokry found many of his fellow brothers facing various challenges and struggles.

“Brothers who were Christians were struggling with living out their faith in the midst of such a busy schedule, several brothers could not handle the stress imposed upon them by school or by themselves, and fundamentally many brothers simply did not know their own worth as beloved adopted sons of the Father, placing their identity and value in things that would not bring them fulfillment,” he says.

Keith led a Bible study at the fraternity with the guidance of the



Since June 2022, Keith Mokry has been serving on a team with five other missionaries at the University of Pittsburgh.

Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) missionary group, which helped provide an opportunity for sharing deeper conversations and vulnerability among the young men.

“These experiences greatly motivated me to do college mission work with FOCUS for these next couple years,” Keith says.

Since June 2022, Keith has been serving on a team with five other missionaries at the University of Pittsburgh. FOCUS is a Catholic collegiate outreach and evangelization organization. Their mission statement is, “To know Christ Jesus and fulfill his Great Commission.” With about 80 percent of young Catholics leaving the Church during

St. John the Baptist

FOCUS Missionary Keith Mokry *continued from front cover*

their college years, the goal is to meet students, invite them to encounter Jesus, and teach them to share the Gospel with others.

“If one person deeply invests in three people and forms them to be disciples of Christ, and those disciples proceed to do the same, not only is the process relational and natural, but it is also exponentially powerful in its impact!” Keith says. “We call this the ‘Little Way of Evangelization.’”

Born and raised in Somonauk, Keith has been a parishioner here at St. John’s for nearly his whole life.

“I graduated as the high school valedictorian from Marmion Academy in 2018,” he says. “I attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where I studied Physics and minored in Computer Science. My interests vary from reading Catholic literary giants like Tolkien or O’Connor to studying articles of St. Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica* to doing quantum field theory calculations, or just enjoying coffee and lively conversation.”

Keith hadn’t always wanted to be a missionary, but between his time at MIT and his own personal encounter with Jesus Christ, he felt the Lord put on his heart the call to be a missionary.

“In pursuing a personal relationship with Christ, I was finding greater freedom, interior healing, and living a more balanced and authentic life,” he says. “And the Lord put it on my heart to be a witness to His love, to live out a lifelong mission in whatever sort of work or state I would find myself in.”

Keith’s work as a missionary includes a plethora of responsibilities and duties, such as leading Bible studies, doing campus outreach with his teammates, serving the poor with students in downtown Pittsburgh, mentoring and developing relationships to journey alongside university students, and more. His life as a missionary may change from day to day, but daily Mass and an hour



Keith’s role with FOCUS provides him the opportunity to serve God and others. He believes this is important, particularly in giving back to God and his community.

in Eucharistic Adoration are what he considers the pillars of his daily life, and ultimately, work life.

“Without cultivating a personal relationship with God, which is truly the soul of any apostolate, the mission work I am doing will be fruitless and a vain exercise in self-reliance,” he says.

Keith’s role with FOCUS provides him the opportunity to serve God and others. He believes this is important, particularly in giving back to God and his community.

“The Lord has made a major difference in my life through FOCUS, and so I want to be an instrument in His good hands for Him to be able to transform the lives of other people as well,” Keith says. “If we come to an understanding, albeit imperfect, of how good God is, how can we not feel the desire to share Him with others?”

A Letter From Our Pastor

If Not *Stewards*, Then What Are We?

Dear Parishioners,

As a stewardship parish, it is important to ask how well we understand the message of stewardship that keeps surfacing in all we do in our personal life and the life of our parish. If not stewards, then what are we? If not disciples of Jesus Christ, then what purpose do we serve as members of His Holy Catholic Church? Aren't these intriguing questions for any believer? And if not, why aren't they?

God's goodness and the gifts given to each of us shouldn't be taken for granted and our lives should be motivated by our gratitude for all we have, including every opportunity that gives glory and honor to God. Those opportunities are given at each moment of each day. Wait for them and expect them to become obvious. The idea of being a steward of those gifts and opportunities isn't new to the realm of believers in the Old Testament or the New Testament. And certainly, the Gospels of Jesus Christ make it quite clear that our Lord views us to be the stewards He expects us to be. His stories and parables confirm it. So, if you cannot or will not see yourself as "that" steward He invites you to be, then what are you? I am curious about those who reject being that steward. I am even more curious about what they believe are the other options.

I am still in awe of the first line in the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, that boldly states: "Once one has decided to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option." They were so convinced that the stewardship way of life is a disciple's way of



life. And yet, that is what we are and have always been.

"If not stewards, then what?" remains a challenging statement to invite us to reflect on what our Catholic faith is calling us to experience and participate in for the time we are given on this earth. It challenges us to face our reflection in the mirror of this life given to us by God and see what our Lord sees in us, and then embrace the opportunities being handed to us each

day of our lives. Blessings and challenges await us, and no matter what the balance may be from day to day, our God equips us with all we need. He created us and sees us as stewards. Why would we dare resist seeing ourselves in the way our God sees us?

Connecting stewardship and discipleship is inevitable in my book. For that matter, it is inevitable in the "Good Book," which we identify and recognize as the Word of God. It matters to our God what we do with the gifts He so generously gives to each of us. Why would it not matter to us? I ask you to take some time to refocus, reevaluate and re-commit yourself to the faithfulness of the life, the time, the talent, and the treasure you have been given.

We are the stewards of those precious gifts. What are we doing with them?

In Christ,

Fr. Butler
Fr. Butler, Pastor

OUR ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP

As a stewardship parish, we recognize that God is always calling us forward. Each year, we need to re-examine the ways in which we'll answer this call, which is the reason for this Stewardship Renewal. Soon, you will be receiving your Stewardship Renewal packet in the mail. Enclosed in this packet is a brochure that will lead you through that self-examination. It is a time to ask how we can better use our time, talent, and treasure.

- Do I make time for prayer? By myself and with my family?
- Is my talent at work in our parish actively building the Church?
- Do I give a proportionate amount of my treasure to the weekly offertory?

*Commitment Weekend is
September 24-25. Don't forget to
bring your Commitment Card to Mass!*

How do I use my Commitment Card?

Your Commitment Card allows you to make commitments to prayer, parish ministries, and offertory giving. It is designed to be used by the whole family.

Time Section: Except for the ill and homebound, everyone should be able to check "Come to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days." Try to check at least a few other items. Daily prayer should be a priority for every person trying to grow closer to God.

Talent Section: You can either sign up for new ministries or re-commit to your current ministries. Be sure to write your first name next to the ministry! This is especially important if more than one person is using the card.

Treasure Section: Clearly print how much money you plan to give each week or month to our parish. Try to take a step toward giving five percent of your income to St. John the Baptist.

Is your prayer life in need of a tune-up?

Honestly ask yourself, "How much time do I spend in prayer each week?" The answer is probably a bit embarrassing. Everyone wants to spend more time in prayer, but there's just never enough time to do everything we want to do. Good intentions are just that: intentions. This year, as you're discerning how you will offer your time to God, resolve to follow through with your commitments. Consider each moment you spend in prayer as nourishment for your soul. The spiritual health of our parish is only as strong as the sum of its parts (individual parishioners).

Is your level of parish involvement in need of a boost?

We give our talents back to God when we get involved in ministries at St. John the Baptist. And, with a host of ministries to choose from, there's something for everyone. Sure, ministries give parishioners opportunities to serve others in the community, but they also benefit those in the ministry itself. Ask anyone who actively participates in a ministry at St. John the Baptist, "Why do you enjoy serving in this way?" They'll probably say, "I get more out of the ministry than the people I serve." This year, as you're discerning how you will offer your talents to God, consider signing up for a ministry that may benefit you, like a Bible study, prayer group, or retreat. Or contribute to an outreach ministry, where your good deeds not only help others in the community but also give you feelings of satisfaction and thankfulness.

RENEWAL

Do you give a percentage of your income to the offertory?

It may be hard to see offertory giving as a way to “help yourself,” but when we approach the subject from a spiritual viewpoint, it can lead to individual spiritual growth and an increase in faith. Even the savviest businessperson worries about his or her personal finances from time to time. Adding a weekly offertory check to the list of monthly bills may seem crazy but, ultimately, sacrificial giving forces us to cut unnecessary spending, create a budget and have faith that God will help us make it through the month. All of these are good things for each of us, individually. After faithfully giving to the offertory for a few months, many Catholics find that it’s not only possible to give a weekly offering, but that the fruits of their gift far outweigh the expense.

At St. John the Baptist, we ask that you give five percent to our parish, one percent to the diocese, and four percent to other charities. Why a percentage of income? First, because the tithe (10 percent) is a scriptural benchmark that the Church has honored for centuries (see Malachi 3:10). Secondly, we give a percentage of income because it is a common-sense standard by which everyone can equitably support the parish. Most of all, we give because we believe God comes first in everything, even finances.

Every parish family receives a special “Stewardship Package” in the mail that further explains our parish’s vision of stewardship. It includes a booklet that describes every ministry in the parish, as well as your Commitment Card.

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

TAKE, BLESS, BREAK, GIVE
St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

BREAK, GIVE
Stewardship Renewal

2022 Stewardship Renewal

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

St. John the Baptist

The Importance of Catholic Faith Formation

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from the 2022 book, Stewardship Starts at Home: Using God's Gifts To Grow As Disciples Of Christ In Our Domestic Church, written by stewardship expert/retreat leader Lisa McArdle and published by Catholic Stewardship Consultants. This excerpt is reprinted with permission from CSC.

There are Four Pillars of a Stewardship Parish – Prayer, Hospitality, Formation, and Service. The third pillar – Formation – teaches us to know and love our God and our faith.

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *National Directory for Catechesis* (2005, #20), there are six tasks of faith formation that constitute a unified whole by which faith formation seeks to achieve its objective. This primary objective is the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ.

The six tasks of formation promote knowledge of the faith, promote knowledge of the meaning of the liturgy and the sacraments, promote moral formation in Jesus Christ, teach us how to pray, prepare one to live in community, and participate actively in the life of the Church, and promote a missionary spirit that prepares one to be present as Christians in society.

Take a moment to consider how fully you are currently formed. When is the last time you read a book about the Catholic faith? When is the last time you participated in a Bible study? When is the last time you read and reflected on the readings before Mass? Or looked up something in the Catechism?

Frequently, the last faith formation parishioners receive dates back to when they completed their Confirmation preparation or attended their last religious formation class as a middle or high school student.

This means decades may have gone by since parishioners and family members have experienced formation.

If that is the last time that you have formed yourself or that members of your families have formed themselves, don't panic. You are not alone.

This realization is an opportunity for growth. A chance to dip your toe back in the water of faith formation and even to learn alongside the members of



your family, including the youngest members who are also learning. Don't ever feel embarrassed that you don't know an answer to the faith questions asked to you by your children or grandchildren. Instead, learn together!

Remember, the more fully you are formed, the better you will understand God's calling for your family. Furthermore, the more you are formed in the faith the easier it will be to answer the call of discipleship.

Being properly formed in our faith and listening to God's call allows us to understand if we are on the right path or if we need to redirect. Being prayerful and well-formed are key to our following His plan for our lives instead of our own wishes and desires. Remember, as stewards, we strive to listen to God and use the gifts He has given us to serve those he places in our paths. Thankfully, it is easier now more than ever to form ourselves and our families.

There is no need to search for faith-formation opportunities. These options can be sent directly to our smartphones and tablets. Bishop Barron's *Word on Fire* ministry sends free daily readings along with a brief gospel reflection straight to our inboxes. Matthew Kelly's *Dynamic Catholic* offers Lenten and Advent opportunities with free, reflective videos that also arrive via email. *Blessed is She* even provides an endearing female faith formation perspective – perfect for women young and old. Plus, if you want to form yourself specifically in Scripture, you can also opt for the free podcast, *The Bible in a Year* featuring the entertaining Fr. Mike Schmitz, from *Ascension Presents*. Honestly, the possibilities are endless.

Formation is the fuel that keeps your family moving forward as stewards and in becoming all that Christ is calling you to be. Have confidence as you incorporate this ongoing learning into your daily routines.

To find out more about the Stewardship Starts at Home book, visit www.stewardship-starts-at-home.company.site.

Daily Mass Attendance Offers a Valuable Chance to Grow in Christ and Community

Most of us are familiar with the Sunday Mass obligation. When you make Sunday Mass a priority, you might find that it becomes a foundation of your week and a way of staying grounded in the deeper purpose that our faith gives us. You may not know that the Mass actually happens every day in our parish. Every day, those who choose to attend daily Mass can be united with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross at Calvary. The graces that come from this are immeasurable.

“There’s so much we deal with in our daily lives,” Fr. Butler says. “The Eucharist is our strength to face those things. The food we eat every day becomes part of us, but the one exception is the Eucharist. The more we receive Holy Communion, the more we become like Christ.”

There are many reasons that parishioners have chosen to make daily Mass a part of their regular routine. For many who have retired, it’s a way of giving structure to their day and beginning with something fruitful that they’ll carry with them all day. For others, daily Mass is a way of connecting with our community – chatting with church friends doesn’t have to be only a weekly opportunity. Beyond socializing, daily Mass unites us with the Body of Christ. At every Mass around the world, all of the saints and angels are present. It’s a way that our loved ones who have gone before can remain present with us.

Why should we take that step beyond Sunday Mass? From Fr. Butler’s own experience, he has found that the more deeply he enters into union with Christ, the more he is drawn on that journey.

“We’re always wanting more because the love we yearn for is eternal,” Fr. Butler says.

continued on back cover

“We often take our secular calendar, with all of our plans, and then we try to fit God in. The other way to do it is to put God right in the center, with Sunday Mass and daily Mass, and then put all the other things in.” — FR. BUTLER



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Somonauk, IL
60552
Permit No. 25

320 S. Depot Street
PO Box 276
Somonauk, IL 60552
Phone: 815-498-2010
www.stjbsom.org

Return Service Requested

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.

Daily Mass Attendance *continued from page 7*

When the things in our daily lives aren't fully satisfying us, it's an indication that what we are really longing for is the divine love of God.

"We are created for relationship with God," Fr. Butler says. "Daily Mass is where we encounter our Lord in the most perfect way."

Marla Alstadt and her mother, Joan Anderson, have been coming to daily Mass regularly for the last three years.

"It's a special opportunity that we can meet for Mass every day," Marla says. "My mother definitely inspired that. I've learned so much about my faith and the saints. It was a slow thing but I can just see veils lifting and doors opening in my faith."

How can we make daily Mass part of our busy lives? Maybe we come one weekday, maybe all five. Whatever we decide, Fr. Butler suggests realigning our priorities.

"We often take our secular calendar, with all of our plans, and then we try to fit God in," he says. "The other way to do it is to put God right in the center, with Sunday Mass and daily Mass, and then put all the other things in."



Daily Mass at St. John is Monday through Friday at 8 a.m. All are welcome!