

AUGUST 2020

# DISCIPLE

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH & SCHOOL



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Parents Key to Keeping the Faith  
Back to School for StMCS  
LIFT Resumes This Fall



# KEEPING KIDS CATHOLIC

*Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it. – Proverbs 22:6*

The most urgent issue in the Church today is how quickly our young people are leaving the faith, so it's been a great blessing to see the strength of our parish school, youth ministry and formation programs here at St. Michael. As a parish, we truly are a model in the archdiocese for engaging youth, teens and families in understanding and practicing our Catholic faith, and as the above quote suggests, if we "hook" our youth early and form them in habits of discipleship, they are far less likely to leave their faith later in life.

But do you know the single most important factor in whether Catholics kids stay Catholic? It's the example of their parents. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) affirms:

*Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God. – CCC 2226*

Children and teens need to know that their parents believe Jesus is real, that they have a personal relationship with Him, and that prayer, Mass and the sacraments are not just something the family does on Sunday, but are personal priorities for both Mom and Dad. Research shows that the father's example is especially important. In many families, women take the lead on religion, but it is the natural role of men to convey to children the things that are of first importance in

life—and we teach them as much by our attitudes as we do by word and action.

So as we head into fall, pray for the education of our young people, their growth in wisdom and virtue, the protection of their health and purity, and their openness to God's vocation for them. Pray for our teachers, staff and volunteers, that they may be healthy, holy examples for the young to follow. And pray that, in word and deed, you too may be a witness that Christ is alive and active today through His Body, the Church. God bless you!

**Fr. Brian Park**  
Pastor

**On the cover:** St. Michael Catholic School Principal Melissa Ginther and Assistant Principal Heidi Gallus greet new and mentor families at the New Family Social earlier this month.

# Learning In Faith—Together

## In-person formation to be offered for families craving community

Bob Swift and Andrea Zachman are more than ready. An abrupt end to faith formation last spring, followed by re-planning safe, socially distanced sacraments for First Communion and Confirmation students, has left them hungry—for families, ministry and some sense of normalcy.

“We are focused on what we know we can do,” says Swift, faith formation director at St. Michael Catholic Church. “We know we can’t do LIFT the way we have in the past, but we are planning in-person sessions for families who want it. Our worship space and gathering space are big enough to gather safely, and my sense is that a lot of people are craving community.”

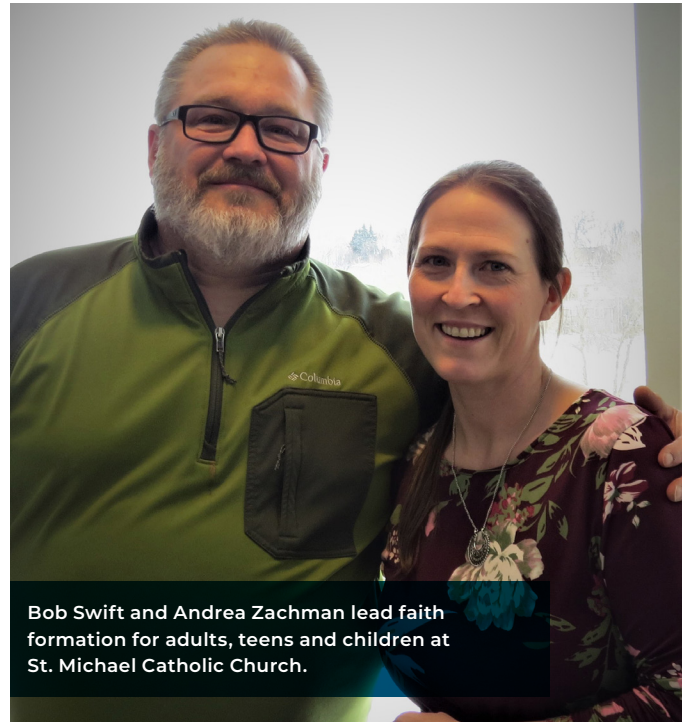
LIFT, or Learning In Faith Together, is the parish’s family faith formation program. Traditionally, families meet monthly; each session opens and closes with family prayer, and students and parents learn through age-appropriate lessons and small-group discussion. Books and materials for home use supplement the classes, encouraging parents in their roles as the first and best teachers of the faith.

According to Swift, this year’s in-person program will be somewhat different:

- Families who choose the in-person program will still attend one of three sessions each month, but classes will be just one hour long: generally, first Sundays, 1-2 PM; first Mondays, 5:30-6:30 PM; or first Wednesdays, 6:30-7:30 PM.
- Sessions will still open and close with prayer in the worship space; in between, middle-schoolers move to the gathering space while adults and younger children remain together in the church.
- Face-covering and cleaning protocols will be the same as they are for Mass.

“We plan to return to the regular LIFT format as soon as we can do so safely,” says Zachman, the parish’s faith formation coordinator. “In the meantime, everything including the in-person presentations will be available online for families who prefer to participate from home, on their own time.”

This year’s LIFT theme will be Happiness and the Beatitudes. The program is still included in tuition for St. Michael Catholic School families, though they need



Bob Swift and Andrea Zachman lead faith formation for adults, teens and children at St. Michael Catholic Church.

to register, and volunteer catechists can still get a teacher discount.

As for other Faith Formation offerings:

- **First Communion** preparation will be somewhat different: four hour-long classes for students and at least one parent are planned in the worship space, with home lessons in between.
- **8th-Grade Discipleship Groups**, a prerequisite for Confirmation, will continue more or less as normal, with small groups meeting on site or virtually if needed.
- **Impact**, an alternative to LIFT for 8th-grade parents who don’t have younger children, will continue as normal, with three dates scheduled in the worship space of the church.
- **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)** and Bible studies will again be offered beginning in the fall, but planning is still underway.
- **Children’s Liturgy of the Word** will remain suspended until it can again be offered safely. Children’s bulletins will be available in the gathering space beginning in September.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 7**



St. Michael Catholic School students, staff and parents worship together at a school Mass before the coronavirus outbreak last spring.

# ON MISSION: NEW FACES, NEW APPROACHES AT STMCS THIS FALL

It's been the steady drumbeat since Melissa Ginther arrived as the new principal at St. Michael Catholic School (StMCS) this summer—the question behind almost every conversation: What will school be like for parish school students this fall?

“Recognizing the real and significant impact of keeping kids out of the classroom for an extended period of time, Bishop Cozzens said in May that Catholic schools would open this fall with safety measures in place to protect the health of students, teachers and staff,” Ginther says. “So first and foremost, our school will be a place where children can encounter the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ and in His disciples—our teachers and staff—on a daily basis.”

Some things never change.

## ‘Unprecedented’

Ginther and new pastor Fr. Brian Park are weathering a storm like no other as they prepare to lead our church and school into a new program year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minnesota Department of Education and school districts statewide are rethinking education this fall, preparing in-school, online and hybrid models to be employed depending on levels of coronavirus infection in schools and surrounding counties.

This approach gives a nod to subsidiarity—the Catholic teaching that such decisions are best made at the local level, as close to the family as possible—but it also means extensive contingency planning and a great deal of uncertainty about how close to “normal” schools can operate.

“Both the archdiocese and the parish are operating on the principle that we cannot eliminate risk entirely—at some point, people in the school will be exposed to coronavirus,” Ginther says. “But there are things we can do



that enable us to open the school prudently, welcome our students back in love and—God willing—remain open until next spring.”

“People say it all the time, but this really is unprecedented,” says Fr. Park. “We’ve never had to reopen in the context of a global pandemic, so I’m asking our parish, first of all, for an outpouring of charity for everyone who is trying to make this work. And let’s blanket everyone in prayer—our students, staff, teachers, volunteers and families; our entire community—that we be protected in everything we do this fall.”

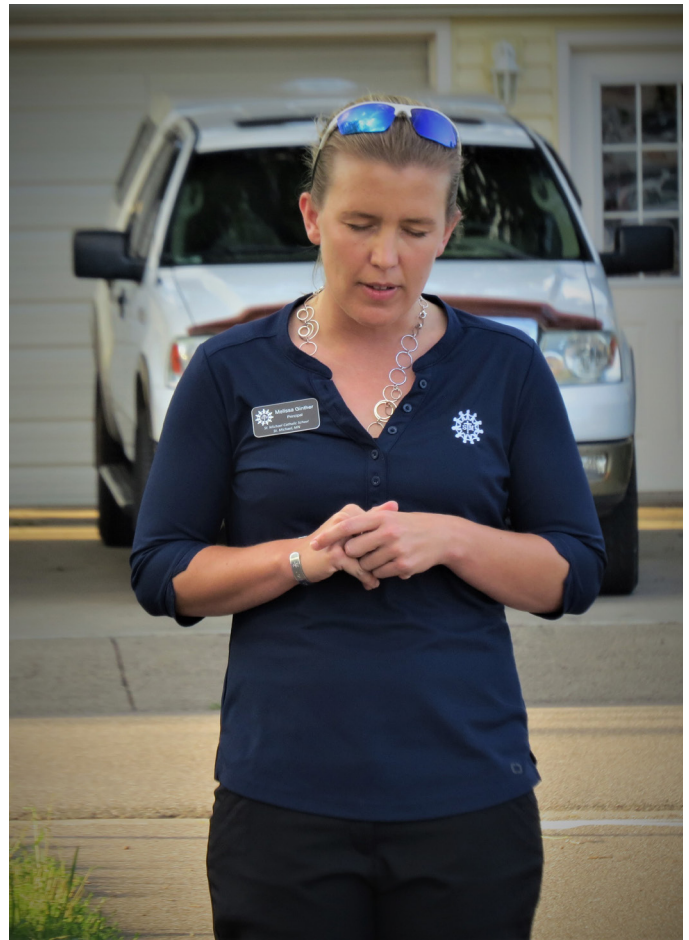
Over the past several weeks, teachers and staff have been working hard on reopening protocols, including policies regarding cleaning and hygiene at school, parental health checks at home, quarantining, remote learning, and more. The school will follow the governor’s face-covering mandate within reason but is working to make the school year as normal as possible for students and parents—including a number of new StMCS families.

“In spite of the uncertainty, we’ve had so much interest in our school from new families that enrollment may actually be higher this fall,” Ginther says. “Some parents may just be looking for a school that is likely to be open in September—but what a beautiful opportunity to share our faith and the benefits of Catholic education. It is truly a blessing!”

## More Challenges—and Opportunities

Summer also meant the retirement of long-time physical education teacher Mike Bloberger and other employee turnover. In addition, the local district’s new approach to providing support for exceptional learners has inspired StMCS to enhance its in-house capabilities. (For background, see “Learning Tools for All of God’s Children” in the March 2020 issue of DISCIPLE.) As a result, families will see a number of new faces at the school this fall.

In addition, restrictions on the number of people who can gather for indoor events means rethinking the school Mass, which typically attracts 700 people or more; limiting larger school gatherings or moving them outdoors; and shifting the usual Christmas Market to an outdoor Artisan Market at the StMCS school parking lot in conjunction with the Fall Festival on Saturday, September 12. The online Bids for Kids event last spring was so successful that the same technology is being used for the Fall Festival silent auction—and in many other areas, things we are doing out of necessity due to COVID-19 are becoming capabilities and opportunities for innovation for both the school and the parish.



StMCS Principal Melissa Ginther leads dozens of new parish school families and mentor families in prayer at the New Family Social on August 13.

“Don’t get me wrong: I wouldn’t wish this situation on anyone,” Ginther says. “I want all of our students back. I want to sing in the church and see smiles in the hallways. But watching our school and community meet these challenges has been truly amazing. Our mission remains to support parents in the education of the whole child, and we are going to do great things together at St. Michael Catholic School this year.”

## Come and See

While StMCS does have waiting lists for some grades, families who are interested in Catholic education are encouraged to come and see what the school can offer. Call 763-497-3887 or visit [stmccatholicchurch.org/stmcs](http://stmccatholicchurch.org/stmcs) to schedule a tour.

## Reopening Plans

Recent communications about StMCS reopening plans, including a one-page overview, a detailed video and the complete Pandemic Preparedness and Readiness Plan, can be found on our Coronavirus Response webpage at [stmccatholicchurch.org/virus](http://stmccatholicchurch.org/virus).

# PUT A LITTLE SOCIAL IN YOUR DISTANCING

**Join us for our Fall Festival on Saturday and Sunday, September 12-13.** Enjoy food, fellowship and good, clean fun onsite at St. Michael Catholic Church and School.

**We have made a number of changes in response to the coronavirus pandemic** to help keep parishioners safe and healthy:

- Grab-n-go chicken dinners with cashless purchase and scheduled pickup
- Professionally prepared or prepackaged food and drink options
- Store-bought desserts only
- No big-top tent = plenty of space outdoors for everyone
- Cake “Hop” and other kids games, socially distanced for safety
- Online bidding for auction and second raffle items
- Fall Festival market with cashless transactions—arts and crafts, country store and toy sale
- Cleaning and sanitization protocols in place for all areas

**New this year!** Food trucks on Saturday and Sunday; Artisan Market on Saturday, outdoors at the St. Michael Catholic School parking lot (replacing the traditional indoor Christmas Market).

**Want to help?** We need volunteers across the board, but especially with chicken dinner prep and pickup, toy and game donations, arts and crafts goods and booth staffing, and store-bought cakes and desserts for the Cake Hop. Sign up to help at [stmfallfestival.wixsite.com/stmccfallfestival](https://stmfallfestival.wixsite.com/stmccfallfestival).

## Stay Tuned!

Watch the bulletin or [stmccatholicchurch.org/fallfestival](https://stmccatholicchurch.org/fallfestival) in the coming weeks.



## Questions?

Call the Parish Office at 763-497-2745 for more information or to volunteer.

# THE FIRST GLORIOUS MYSTERY: THE RESURRECTION

*On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." ... Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" She thought it was the gardener and said to him, "Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni," which means Teacher. – John 20:1-2, 15-16*

The First Glorious Mystery is the Resurrection, in which our Lord rises from the dead and is revealed to His disciples. His followers scattered after His betrayal and capture, and while they have begun to gather together again, they are shaken, confused and afraid. In St. John's gospel, St. Mary Magdalene is the first to visit the tomb in the garden near Golgotha and the first to see Christ—though at first she doesn't know Him. In this image we see day breaking over the arched rock from which the tomb was carved, and heavenly light emanating from within the cave, as well. Mary Magdalene kneels before Jesus, who appears in garments of heavenly white as at the Transfiguration and stands as one with authority. We can see this is Mary Magdalene, not only because she lacks the Blessed Virgin's crown of stars, but because she appears with a jar of ointment and her hair uncovered and unbound, recalling the story of Mary anointing our Lord's feet and drying them with her hair.

This image of Christ as the gardener not only ties Him to the earth, where he dwelt in bodily form for several weeks and appeared to many eyewitnesses, but it ties directly to this gospel passage, as which Jesus specifically reveals He will ascend to the Father. And while one might question how Mary could mistake this man clothed in white as a gardener, in the traditional sense, a garden is land set aside for a specific purpose; it brings forth life and is often walled off and guarded from whatever would threaten its peace, beauty and purpose. In the beginning, Adam was given responsibility to care for the garden of Eden and look after his bride, but in Genesis 3:6, it is revealed that after Eve speaks with the serpent and eats of the forbidden fruit, "her husband, who was with her," does the same. Adam was present for the temptation of Eve by the serpent, but does not protect her or intercede—and the result is sin and death. By contrast Jesus, the new Adam, is the true gardener, bringing forth life and protecting what is His from every threat, including death itself.



The stained glass windows representing the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary appear above the entrance to the vesting sacristy at the back of the worship space on the statuary side.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"We are glad to be getting back to ministry and hope that people will come back to our programs as soon as they feel safe," Swift says. "Pope Francis recently shared a homily warning against the danger of the Church losing its sense of community. We are made to worship the Lord together."

To sign up for LIFT or other programs, follow the instructions at [stmccatholicchurch.org/formation](http://stmccatholicchurch.org/formation).

## What About Youth Ministry?

Stay tuned: Youth Ministry is still awaiting final guidelines from the Archdiocese. Watch the September issue of DISCIPLE or the Youth Ministry website, [stmacatholicyouth.org](http://stmacatholicyouth.org), for details as they are available.



Learning In Faith Together



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### SUNDAY MASS

Saturday Vigil 5 PM

Sunday 8 AM, 10:30 AM, 6 PM

### WEEKDAY MASS

Monday 7:30 AM

Tuesday 6:30 PM

Wednesday 7:30 AM at St. Albert

Thursday 7:30 AM

Friday 7:45 AM (Summer 7:30 AM)

First Saturday 8 AM

### RECONCILIATION

Saturday 7:30-9 AM, 3:30-4:45 PM

(not during First Saturday Mass from 7:45 to 8:30 AM)

Sunday 9:30-10:15 AM

Tuesday 5:15-6:15 PM

Thursday 8-8:30 AM

The DISCIPLE newsletter is created by St. Michael parish staff and the Stewardship Committee unless otherwise noted. For more information, call 763-497-2745 ext. 245 or email [jthorp@stmccatholicchurch.org](mailto:jthorp@stmccatholicchurch.org).

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## LOOKING AHEAD

### AUGUST

Wed 8/26 StMCS Middle Level Open House, 5 PM

Thu 8/27 StMCS K-4 Open House, 4 PM

Mon 8/31 Staff Retreat (Office Closed)

### SEPTEMBER

Sun 9/6 New Parishioner Orientation, 11:45 AM

Mon 9/7 Labor Day (Office Closed)

Tue 9/8 StMCS First Day of School

Wed 9/9 New D-Group Leader Orientation 1, 6:30 PM

Thu 9/10 New D-Group Leader Orientation 2, 6:30 PM

Sat 9/12 Fall Festival

Sun 9/13 Fall Festival

Mon 9/14 First Communion Parent Meeting, 6 PM

Tue 9/15 Grade 8 D-Group Parent Meeting, 6:30 PM  
(Option 1, St. Albert)

Wed 9/16 Grade 8 D-Group Parent Meeting, 6:30 PM  
(Option 2, St. Michael)

Mon 9/21 StMCS School Picture Day

Wed 9/23 LIFT Parent Information Meeting, 6 PM

Tue 9/29 Feast of St. Michael the Archangel

Wed 9/30 First Wednesday LIFT Night, 6:30 PM