

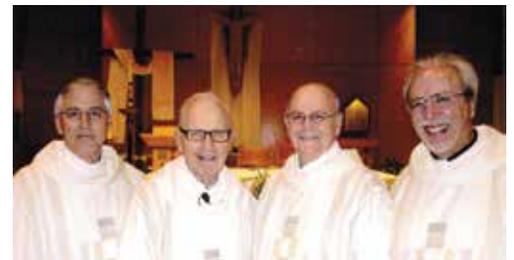
The Permanent Diaconate as a Vocation

"Great Role Models for All of Us"

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Deacons, priests and bishops. In respective order, these are the three levels of ordained in the Catholic Church. Then, in terms of deacons, there are two types – permanent deacons are those ordained to be a deacon only, while transitional deacons are ordained on the journey to the priesthood, and are thus in "transition." And while permanent deacons were a set practice in the early days of the Church, that category of ordained fell into general disuse for centuries. However, in 1967, Pope Paul VI restored the diaconate as a permanent ministry, and the first permanent deacons in the United States were ordained in 1971.



(From left) Deacon Tony Finneman, Deacon Ray Gabar, Deacon Doyle Schulz, and Msgr. Jim Braaten

According to the United States Council of Catholic Bishops, "The call to the Order of Deacon is a call to a ministry of service. The service ministry of a deacon may take many forms. Most deacons serve in parish ministry, primarily working with the pastor and the parish staff in facilitating lay ministry. Like the priest, the deacon should call others to ministry by his witness and his example."

In the Diocese of Bismarck, men have been called forth to be ordained as permanent deacons since 1981. The man responsible for the Diaconate Office is Mr. David Fleck. As he contemplates the diaconate, he shares that those whom Christ calls to the diaconate often encounter two main influences as they ponder the possibility of becoming a deacon.

"The first is that they are very often approached by someone who says, 'Have you ever thought about becoming a deacon?' – there is often this external invitation voiced to them by another person (a fellow parishioner or a pastor for example)," he says. "Second, there begins to grow within them an inexplicable stirring of their heart toward a life of service in the Church, modeled after Christ, who came 'to serve, not to be served.'"

To be sure, deacons are excellent examples of stewardship in action. Even the word "deacon" finds its roots in the Greek word *diakonos*, which means "servant" or

continued on back cover

SEPTEMBER 2017

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The Eucharist and Stewardship as a Way of Life

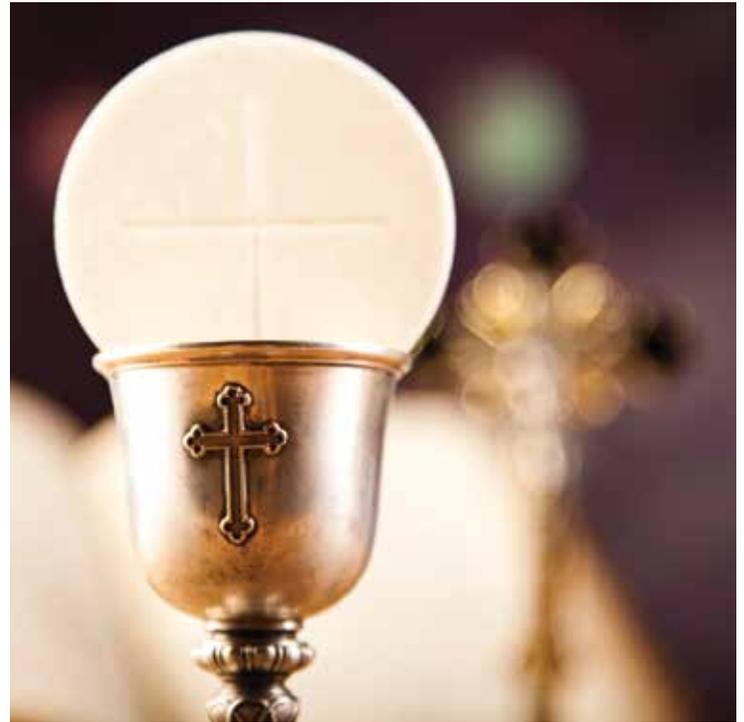
More than 20 years ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a pastoral letter titled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. This document was an invitation to follow Christ Who gave of Himself for us. Each of us is called to serve our neighbors and to be stewards of God's creation and of all that has been entrusted to us. However, to truly understand stewardship, we must look to the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is the total gift of our loving Savior to us. Stewardship is our response to that gift.

Even the word "Eucharist" implies stewardship. The word "Eucharist" finds its roots in the Latin word *eucharistia*, which in turn came from the Greek word *eukaristos*, which meant, quite simply, "gratitude" or "thanksgiving." How fitting that we, who are called to be a stewardship people, celebrate at the focal point of every Mass an act of thanksgiving and gratitude — namely, the reception of Jesus' gift to us — the Eucharist.

In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the bishops speak of the Eucharist in this way: "The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of this expansive communion of charity... we enjoy a unique union with Christ and, in Him, with one another. Here His love — indeed, His very Self — flows into us as disciples and, through us and our practice of stewardship to the entire human race."

When we receive Christ's Body in the Holy Eucharist, we hear the minister say, "The Body of Christ." To this, we respond, "Amen" — which means in Hebrew, "Yes; it is so." This is the essence of stewardship. We should enter the Church for Mass out of "gratitude." We recognize the presence of the Lord in Holy Communion, and then we truly receive the Lord. What is left for us to do is the fulfillment of stewardship — that is, sharing what we have received in love of God and neighbor. Our entire experience speaks to stewardship — we are grateful; we recognize the real presence of the Lord; we receive the Lord; and then we share what we have received.

Christ's gift to us through the Eucharist is an invitation to us. We are called to give beyond what



is convenient or what may be comfortable. We are called to forgive even when forgiveness may not be deserved; we are called to love even when that love is not returned. We are called to love as God loves us.

The Eucharist is stewardship celebrated. The Mass is more than a ritual. It is an actual encounter with God, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We need to respond to the Eucharist with our complete selves. What we experience in the Eucharist should, in turn, translate into our daily lives. We are committed to the Church, which is Christ's body. We show our love for His body by acts of charity and generosity. We spend time in prayer, expressing our gratitude and our love.

God's greatest gift to us is Christ's great love for us — this was shown when He was crucified on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to give us eternal life. God's love for us is without limit, and He offers Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Stewardship is how we respond to that gift.



A Letter from Our Pastor

Save Room on Your Busy Schedules for Stewardship

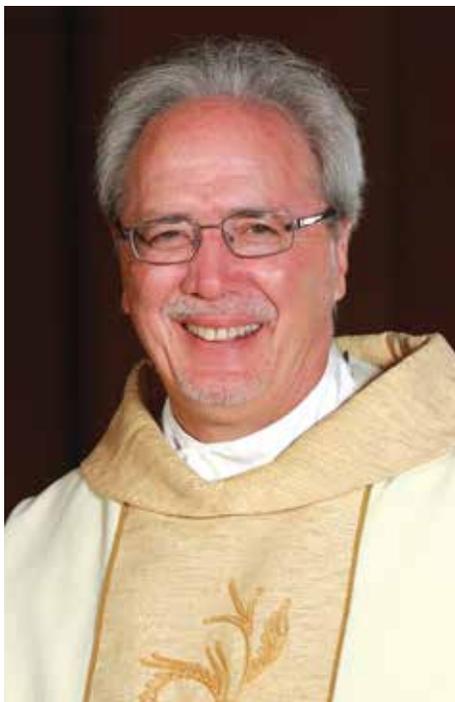
Dear Parishioners,

I don't know about you, but I still get a surge of adrenalin as the beginning of September approaches. Even though I'm no longer in school, I feel a sense of anticipation when I see the shelves filled with brand-new notebooks, composition books, and all the assorted items students use. I'm aware once again of the great hopes, exciting dreams, and good intentions that a new school year holds.

Even for those parishioners not directly involved in school, September marks new beginnings. Labor Day traditionally marks the unofficial end of the summer vacation season, and our calendars may reflect that. Many of you have calendars a lot like mine — they're full year-round with appointments and obligations. But even for us, things get busier in September as various organizations that took a break during summer begin their regular round of meetings again.

Nevertheless, I have a request for you as you fill up your fall schedules. First thing, please put in some time to share the talents God has given you. As you are aware, as Christian disciples — as stewards — we are called to return to God a portion of the Time, Talent, and Treasure He has entrusted to us. We should make our commitments to God when we begin our planning, so that we don't offer Him just the scraps of time and energy left over after everything else.

Make this September the month you make a commitment to sing in the choir, including attending rehearsals. Or begin working with our parish religious education in one way or another. Or decide to launder altar linens once a month. Or volunteer to help in the parish office. Or help care for the parish grounds. Or



join the Knights of Columbus. Or join a social service ministry. Or... well, you get the idea.

There are many ministries and groups within the parish where you can serve, and you'll find that you receive even as you give. Hardly anyone in the parish can't find at least one activity in which they can participate and which fits their schedule. If you aren't involved, make this September the month to change that.

Thinking about commitments, some people say they don't have time for prayer. Again, it's a matter of priorities, and I challenge any one of you to demonstrate to me that you can't pray at least one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one

Glory Be during the course of the day. That's at least a beginning.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten
Pastor



RCIA at Ascension: "Comi

When Daniel and Hannah Cahoon first met, they had little idea of the fabulous graces God had in store for them, both as individuals, and as a couple. By going through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults process – or RCIA – together, their hearts have been united in a meaningful way, as they allowed themselves to be embraced by Holy Mother the Church. And as a cradle Catholic, Hannah was grateful to have the opportunity to sponsor Daniel in RCIA.

"It was really exciting to see Daniel develop a sense of ownership for the faith and decide he wanted to become Catholic," Hannah says. "It was so cool to hear him say, 'Yes, these are the things that I believe, and I want to be part of this faith community and go forward in the spiritual life.' It was an incredible experience – one I will always treasure."

As his sponsor, Hannah not only witnessed Daniel climb beautiful "mountains" on his spiritual journey, but she was also amazed to see her own spiritual growth, as well.

"One of the things I have enjoyed so much about being a sponsor is that I have been able to learn more about the Catholic faith myself," she says. "I went through various sacramental preparation programs, to Catholic school and even to a Catholic college – yet, somehow I still didn't know the Church's true teachings on some of the most basic issues in life. I think it can be taken for granted the cradle Catholics should just 'know' these things, so no one teaches them about them. It was really neat to hear the truth!"

Consequently, the RCIA process brought about some interesting conversations between the two as they did some "deep theological digging" and "soul searching."

"There were definitely moments where his questions about Catholicism caused me to question things, as well," Hannah says. "We had some intense conversations where we worked through our uncertainties, and wondered why the Church's teachings on some issues seemed so strict. But we just had to take time to look into the teachings and understand why they are that way."





ng Home” to Mother Church

And that is precisely what the RCIA team is there for – to help others appreciate the gift of Catholicism in its fullness.

“Deacon Doyle was really awesome about answering our questions, and showing us that it is not just all about rules – it is about the heart and spirit of the Catholic faith,” Hannah says. “In the end, RCIA helped us draw nearer to Christ and the Church. It welcomed us in and encouraged us to be the best version of ourselves.”

As in Daniel’s case, people wishing to become Catholic are assigned sponsors who accompany them on their faith journey and help them integrate into the life of the parish.

“The job of a sponsor is to accompany the person in RCIA on their journey to a deeper relationship with God in Jesus Christ,” says Director of RCIA, Deacon Doyle Schulz, who conducts each RCIA session. “The sponsor plays a vital role in the RCIA process. They are usually the one who brought the person to the faith and will guide them by their example. Without a proper sponsor the program can be reduced to a simple class on the Catholic faith, rather than a lifelong commitment to be a true disciple of Christ.”

Being an RCIA sponsor is truly a privilege and a call from God. More sponsors are needed to walk alongside RCIA members as they “come home” to Mother Church.

“Sponsors need to be, first of all, someone who is willing to share their faith, and is welcoming and hospitable,” Deacon Doyle says. “We are looking for good listeners that are open, attentive and ready to accept a challenge.”



“I went through various sacramental preparation programs, to Catholic school and even to a Catholic college – yet, somehow I still didn’t know the Church’s true teachings on some of the most basic issues in life. I think it can be taken for granted the cradle Catholics should just ‘know’ these things, so no one teaches them about them. It was really neat to hear the truth!” – Hannah Cahoon

If you would like more information on how to participate in this beautiful ministry of God’s grace, please contact the parish office at 701-223-3606.

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.

Christ's 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.





Church of the Ascension

Financial Report

July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Cash in Bank	\$ 138,628.94	
Investment-Expansion Fund	230,424.97	
Accounts Receivable	12,825.84	
Pre-paid Expense	<u>170.72</u>	\$ 382,050.47
Building	1,718,817.74	
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment	<u>407,103.38</u>	
TOTAL ASSETS:		\$2,125,921.12
Accounts Payable		41,749.37
TOTAL NET ASSETS:		<u>\$2,549,720.96</u>

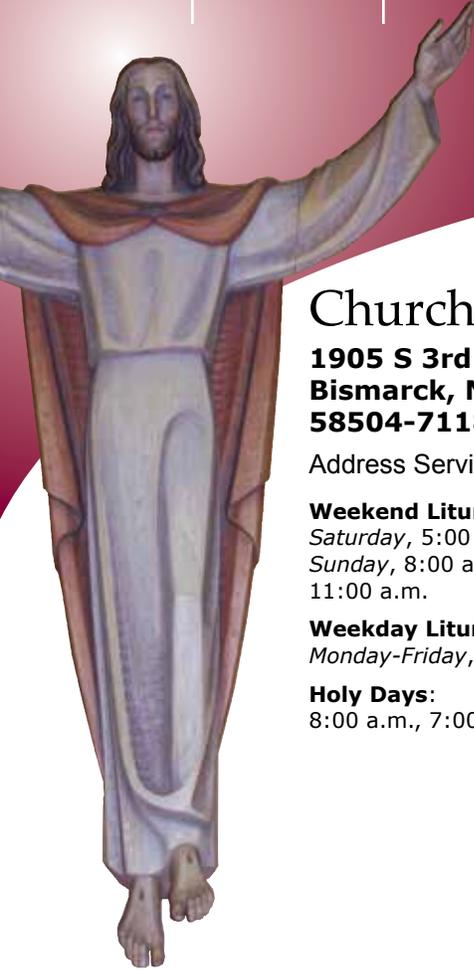
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Income:		Expenses:	
Sunday Contributions	\$654,235.65	Payroll, Payroll taxes & emp. ben. (3 Full-time/5 Part-time)	\$298,541.05
Special Donations	11,323.88	Parochial School Support	277,966.44
Faith Formation Income	15,180.00	Building Operating Costs	67,595.08
SMCHS Carnival	33,568.75	Office Operations	33,326.20
BACEF	20,743.89	Missalettes, Newsletter, Printing	28,122.69
Casey Trust Fund	19,090.00	Education Programs	17,710.40
Miscellaneous Income	14,458.29	Stewardship Program	38,264.75
Interest Income	1,250.79	Other Expenses (Cemetery, Youth, Parish, Social etc.)	19,161.80
Votive Candles	9,662.27		
Operating Income	<u>779,513.52</u>	Operating Expense	<u>780,688.41</u>
Offerings for Maintenance	22,482.00	Maintenance Fund Expenses	15,749.93
Offerings for the Poor	<u>37,065.57</u>	Poor Fund Donations	<u>36,699.77</u>
	<u>59,547.57</u>		<u>52,449.70</u>
TOTAL INCOME	\$839,061.09	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$833,138.11

Poor Fund Donations

July 1 to December 31, 2016

Abused Adult Resource Center	\$ 1,661.00
AID Inc.	8,302.00
Community Action	8,302.00
Meals on Wheels	668.00
Ministry on the Margins	1,329.00
Ronald McDonald House	1,329.00
Salvation Army	8,302.00
Welcome House	3,320.00
Rides to Mass	266.00
Christmas Eve Dinner	2,211.39
The Banquet	<u>1,009.38</u>
TOTAL	\$36,699.77



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Weekend Liturgy

Saturday, 5:00 p.m.

*Sunday, 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m.,
11:00 a.m.*

Weekday Liturgy:

Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.

Holy Days:

8:00 a.m., 7:00 p.m.

The Permanent Diaconate as a Vocation *continued from front cover*

“one who serves.” We are blessed to have three deacons here at Ascension Catholic Church – Deacon Tony Finneman, Deacon Ray Grabar, and Deacon Doyle Schulz. In addition, we have one man in formation, John Paul Martin.

It is well to remember and know that a deacon is an ordained minister in the Church who, like the priest, assists the bishop. But he does so in a different way than the priest. The priest’s primary action is the sanctification of the community through the offering of prayers and sacraments. The deacon also assists in the sanctification of the community, but primarily through service and witness, both verbal and personal. Specifically, a deacon may baptize, celebrate marriages, perform funerals, and is often involved in education and spiritual formation. A deacon may give the homily at a Mass, and is the “ordinary”

minister of the Eucharist, meaning that he is the normal assistant for distributing Communion, both at Mass and when visiting the homebound. He often assists at Mass and other sacraments in specific ways, such as reading the Gospel, assisting with prayers or serving at the altar. Deacons often specialize in some kind of ministry that is of interest to them, like ministry to prisoners, workers, the poor or homeless, etc.

Our pastor, Msgr. Jim Braaten, has a great appreciation for deacons and for the diaconate.

“It is a great blessing for me as a pastor to have three deacons to assist me in so many ways,” Monsignor says. “They were ordained for service, and that is exactly what they offer to our parish. They are great role models for all of us.”

Our parish and the Church are open to men who might be interested in pursuing a vocation as a deacon. Msgr. Braaten encourages anyone interested to contact him at 701-223-3606, or Mr. David Fleck, the Director of the Office of the Diaconate, at 701-204-7210.

Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.