



# CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## *"Helping Ascension Grow and Flourish"* **Meet Our New Parish Business Manager, Beth Kathol**

### **Inside this Issue**

- 2** Thanksgiving Spirit Doesn't Need to End in November
- 3** A Time for Thanksgiving
- 4** Capturing Sacred Moments  
*Mike Kramer Shares His Faith Journey*
- 6** Evangelization, the Church, and Our Commitments as Stewards
- 7** Sharing in Prayer and Fellowship Through the Living Rosary

**W**hen God gives gifts to His creatures, He knows just what He's doing. His plans are omniscient, and His generosity is boundless. All we need to do is accept the gift with open arms. Recently, Beth Kathol, our new Parish Business Manager did just this — she accepted an appointment to serve our parish in a new way and opened her arms to all of the graces that come right along with the job.

"I have a Master of Arts degree in Pastoral Ministry, and I feel that my education and experience in working in many aspects of parish life, including the business aspects, has provided a very solid foundation for my appointment," Beth says. "However, the biggest influence on my life that has led me to this point in my career and ministry is God. I give thanks to Him every day for the strong faith and love He instilled in my heart for the Catholic Church at a very young age. I undoubtedly feel God calling me to share my time and talents with the parish community in this new role."

For the past three years, Beth served as the Director of Faith Formation at our parish. As a faithful parishioner, she has also been instrumental in the



*Beth Kathol with her husband, Gregg, and children Margaret, Blaise, Lainey, Deacon, and twins Jack and Annabelle on their Baptism day this past summer*

development of our parish website, helping with our Parish Picnic and Christmas Eve Dinner.

As our new Parish Business Manager, Beth will be overseeing the following — the finances of the parish, the parish staff, the building maintenance needs, and all of the committees and organizations in the parish.

"One of my biggest objectives as Business Manager is to be a good steward of the parish resources, as well

*continued on back cover*

**NOVEMBER 2017**

1905 South 3rd Street  
Bismarck, ND 58504-7118  
701-223-3606  
ascensionbismarck.org



## Thanksgiving Spirit Doesn't Need to End in November

The origin of the first Thanksgiving feast is a matter of some debate among historians. But since 1863, Americans have annually set aside the fourth or fifth Thursday of November to give thanks to God for a bountiful harvest. The holiday became a matter of federal law in 1941, as President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a joint congressional resolution to observe Thanksgiving Day on the fourth Thursday of November. Even as our society has become less agrarian, families continue to gather each November to give thanks to God for each other, and for the many blessings they have received throughout the year.

Most people associate this “spirit of Thanksgiving” with the fall holiday and its many recognizable symbols – brisk weather, cornucopias, family gatherings, and plenty of delicious food. But giving thanks to God in gratitude for the gifts we have received isn't an attitude we should save for this annual holiday alone. When we live lives of stewardship – sharing of our time, talents, and treasure in thanks to God and at the service of others – we can sustain life in the Thanksgiving spirit throughout the year.

The Church teaches that this daily response of gratitude is an important element of living the life of a Christian disciple. As the *Catechism of the Catholic*

*Church* states, “Indeed, in the work of salvation, Christ sets creation free from sin and death to consecrate it anew and make it return to the Father, for his glory. The thanksgiving of the members of the Body participates in that of their Head” (CCC, 2637).

And how can we express this spirit of thanks? We can serve others, living the virtue of charity by reaching out to our brothers and sisters in need through acts of kindness. We can give back to God from our “first fruits,” sharing of our treasure in thanksgiving and recognition of the need to return a portion of our gifts to God. We can utilize our unique talents to make our parish and local communities better places. And, as the *Catechism* also points out, we can even express thanks through prayerfully offering up our daily activities to God – “Every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving” (CCC, 2638).

This Thanksgiving, take a moment to think of ways that you can live in the “spirit of Thanksgiving” on the fourth Thursday of November, and every other day throughout the year. Living the stewardship way of life may not always involve a precisely carved turkey, decorations or a family viewing of *It's a Wonderful Life* – but it will provide lifelong fulfillment and joy rooted in an attitude of perpetual thanksgiving.



*A Letter from Our Pastor*

# A Time for Thanksgiving

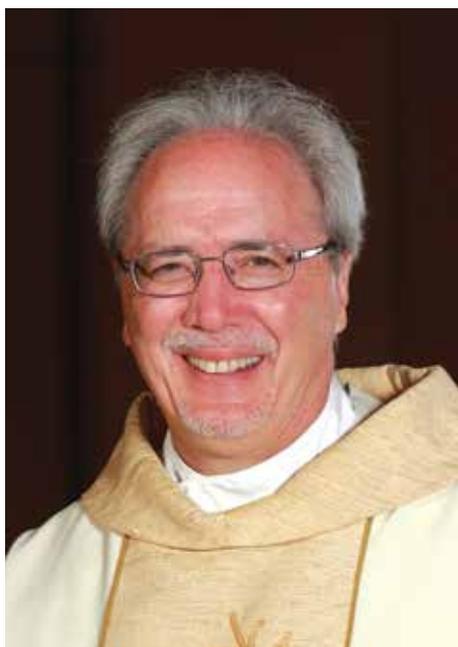
Dear Parishioners,

November seems to automatically bring us to thoughts of thanksgiving and Thanksgiving – it is both a time of year when we tend to think in terms of gratitude to God, and a time when we also formally celebrate our American holiday. My memories of Thanksgiving are filled with food, of course, but they are also filled with thoughts of family and a sense of togetherness and a sense of my faith.

But this is also a significant month in the Church from a number of perspectives. Nov. 1 is a Holy Day, the Solemnity of All Saints. The next day is All Souls Day, a day devoted to all the saints in our lives – living, not living, known, and unknown.

Most of us have people in our lives who have had a profound impact on us – people we can consider our own personal saints. This month is a wonderful reminder to think of them, thank them, and thank God for making them a part of our lives.

Our Thanksgiving holiday falls on Nov. 23, and is a time for families and gratitude. Thanksgiving became official in the United States in 1863, and in his proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln made very clear Whom we needed to thank. “To these bounties,



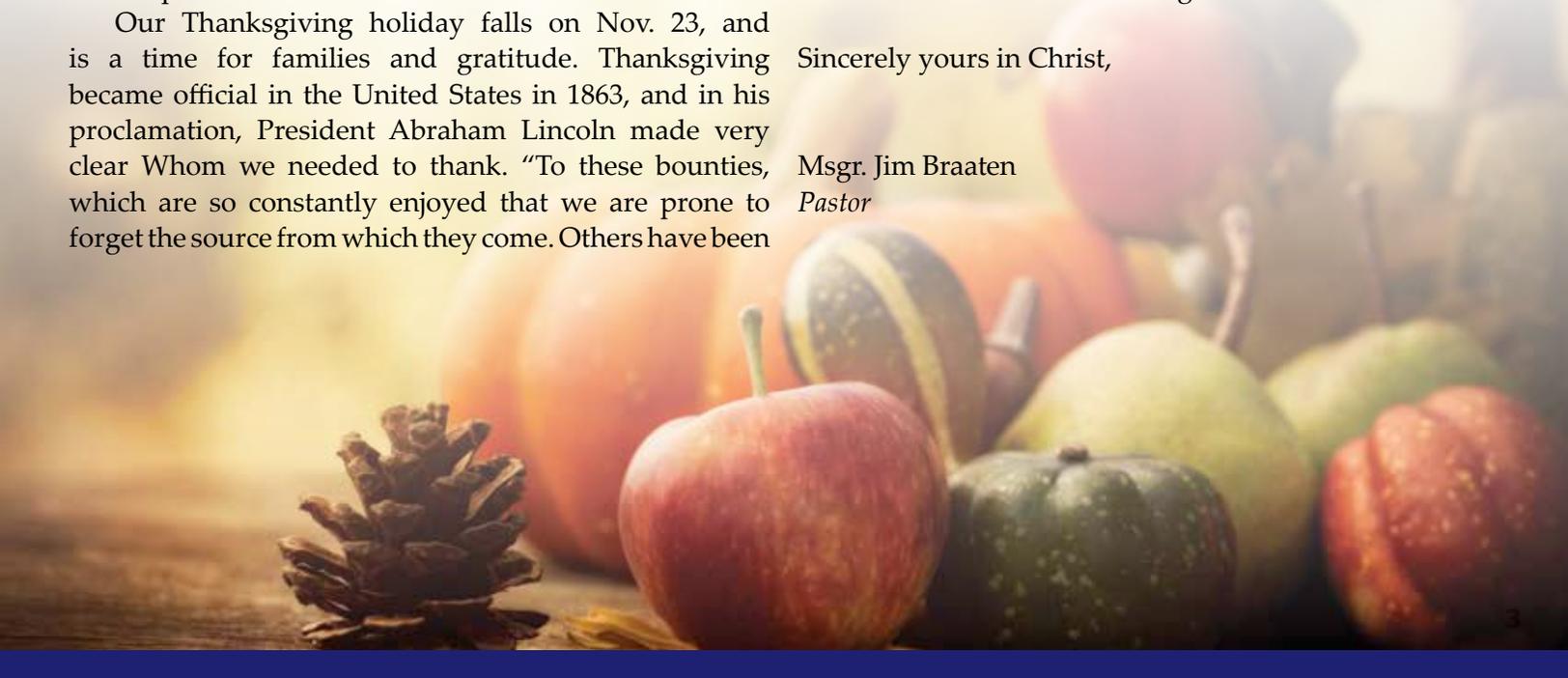
added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God,” Lincoln said. In other words, we all need to thank Almighty God for our many blessings.

Finally, November also brings us to the end of one Church year and the beginning of a new one. The Feast of Christ the King on Nov. 26 officially begins the final week of our liturgical year, and the First Sunday of Advent is on Dec. 3. From the beginning of the month when we thank God for the example of the saints and the saintly

people in our lives, to the end of the month when we thank God for everything we have and everything we are, November is a time to approach the Lord with a grateful heart. That is what stewardship truly is all about – about approaching God, about approaching each day, and about approaching all those with whom we come in contact with hearts filled with gratitude and love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten  
*Pastor*





## Capturing Sacred Moments

### Mike Kramer Shares

God blesses each one of us with countless gifts and talents that help make up the intricacies of our personality — things like a musical ear, athleticism, or our intellectual abilities. In the case of parishioner Mike Kramer, one of his particular gifts has always been exceptionally keen vision. Dubbed “eagle eye” as a boy, Mike’s friends were always anxious to have him go hunting with them, because he’d never fail to spot a deer. And with this giftedness of sight came a fascination of light and man’s ability to capture it through photography.

“I’ve always been particularly fascinated by light since a young age,” Mike says. “It’s something we can’t truly see zooming all around the room. It’s something that’s invisible to us unless reflected off of something. To me, that’s always been a kind of

metaphor for the faith, bringing me back to the Creed where we say ‘God the Father Almighty...of all things visible and invisible.’”

This early love for light was further cultivated by Mike’s father, who was an amateur photographer. At the young age of 4 years old, Mike could be found in the dark room with his dad, helping to develop new photos. The combination of these early experiences, along with Mike’s natural aptitude, ended up setting Mike on a career path toward professional photography and, later, cinematography. Through a series of twists in the road, he was blessed to work as a broadcaster for both ABC and BBC affiliates for numerous years, among several other photographic and cinematic endeavors.

Yet, things took a dramatic turn on Aug. 23, 2006, when Mike suffered a severe spinal injury that caused temporary paralysis from the waist down. Despite several procedures and doctors’ examinations, Mike was soon forced to accept a life of chronic pain that would permanently change both his career and lifestyle. No longer able to lug around heavy camera equipment, Mike was effectively sidelined as a photographer. And yet, this turned into a tremendous blessing as it opened up the door for Mike to begin using his talents for God and His Church in an entirely new way.

“I was there for special events like First Holy Communion and Confirmation where no sort of professional documentation was taking place,” Mike says. “I literally thought to myself, ‘Well, I have



Parishioner Mike Kramer.



Mike with his wife, Kari, and their two sons.



# Sacred Moments in His Faith Journey

nothing better to do.' And then, later I spoke with Msgr. Jim about taking photos for these events."

What began as simply a way to fill his time quickly grew into a much bigger and more profound experience. For, Mike says, by documenting and partaking in these sacramental events, he was also able to share in the smiles, laughter, and even tears of the families — to witness up close their love for God and to see it literally be passed on to new generations. Later, Mike was asked to further expand his ministry by taking annual photos for the parish's stewardship materials. This, too, became a tremendous blessing for Mike, strengthening his own personal faith each and every time.

"It's something that I look forward to every year," Mike says. "It's different documenting, watching other people worship in the Mass, and the actions of the priest and the deacon. It's different when you are that person in the background, moving around. You get to see how other people are living out their stewardship, and it's very inspiring. It's a totally different experience than sitting in the pew during the service, when you are more focused on your own personal worship."

Though Mike would never have chosen his spinal injury, the end result has been a much greater understanding of and appreciation for stewardship. Defining it as giving back the talents with which



*Taking photos for parish stewardship materials and special events has been a great blessing to Mike, allowing him to use his God-given talents for His glory.*

God has blessed him, Mike feels grateful for this unique opportunity to serve the parish. It's helped him draw closer to his parish family, many of whom he's known for nearly 30 years, but only recently truly connected with. And it's given him a greater sense of purpose, knowing that he's doing his part to serve God and His Church.

"This is our family," Mike says. "Our parish is a family and we

are each called to help our family members in whatever ways we can. Stewardship, then, is all about taking whatever gifts we've been blessed with and using them to bless the family. This whole experience has made me so much closer to God, to Monsignor, and to the other parishioners. I love the interaction that I get to do with people through this and feel blessed to be able to serve in this small way."

*"Our parish is a family and we are each called to help our family members in whatever ways we can. Stewardship, then, is all about taking whatever gifts we've been blessed with and using them to bless the family. This whole experience has made me so much closer to God, to Monsignor, and to the other parishioners." — Mike Kramer*

# "Therefore Go and Make Disciples of All Nations" Evangelization, the Church, and Our Commitments as Stewards

According to the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus' parting words to us before He ascended to heaven after His resurrection included these instructions: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

That is, quite frankly, a call to evangelization. Clearly, evangelization is not new to the Church – it is traced to that call from Jesus Christ, a call to His apostles and followers of that time, and that call continues today in relation to us and our lives as Catholics. "Evangelization" has become a bit of a "catchphrase" in today's Church. Of course, it is not a new idea, nor is it a new call.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis' absolute first publication – officially an apostolic exhortation – was titled *Evangelii Gaudium*, which means "The Joy of the Gospel." In that document, the pope had much to say about evangelization, including this: "Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love" (120).

Nevertheless, the idea of evangelization is nothing new. Pope St. John Paul II issued an encyclical in December 1990 titled *Redemptoris Missio* – "The Mission of the Redeemer" – in which he called for the church to renew its efforts in evangelization. This has become known as the "new evangelization," but within, what Pope St. John Paul II says is that the Church "must renew her missionary commitment." He adds, "Faith is strengthened when it is shared and given to others" (2).

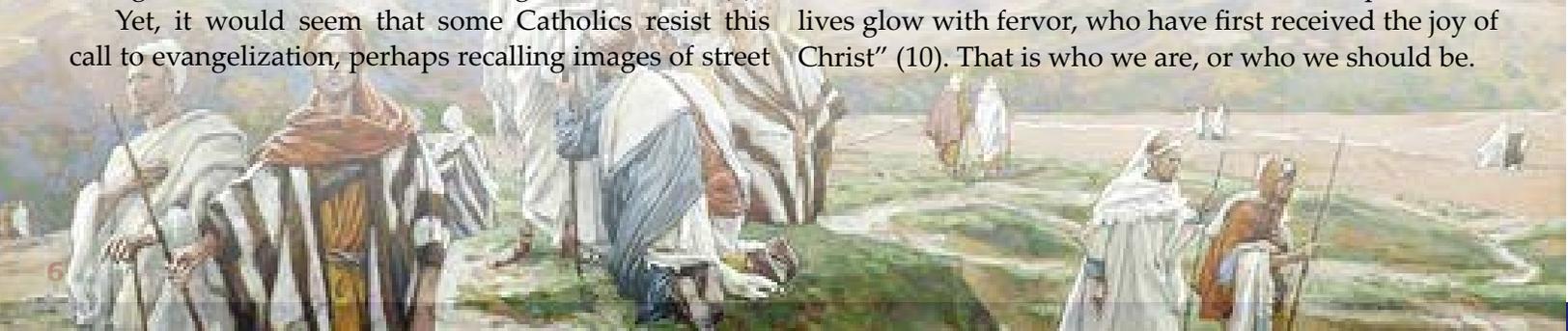
Yet, it would seem that some Catholics resist this call to evangelization, perhaps recalling images of street

preachers, television evangelists or door-to-door groups saying "repent" or talking about the "wages of sin." Or, we may feel that evangelization is the role of saints or missionaries or Catholic priests. The truth is that evangelization is born from a love of people and a desire that everyone comes to know the love of Christ and the blessings of living as part of His Kingdom.

Over a decade before Pope St. John Paul II addressed this issue, Pope Paul VI issued an apostolic exhortation in 1975 titled *Evangelii Nuntiandi* – "Evangelization in the Modern World" – in which the pope said, "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing of all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church" (14).

So, what does this mean to us as faithful stewards? Obviously, each of us is called to be an evangelist. That does not mean we go door-to-door or stand on street corners proclaiming our faith. Our own mission statement has a strong flavor of evangelization, especially because of our effort to embrace stewardship as a way of life. In recent years, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued two pastoral letters – one called *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy of Catholic Evangelization*, and the other titled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. The connection between stewardship, evangelization and discipleship is obvious, it would seem.

Pope Francis also said in his first official statement *Evangelii Gaudium* the following: "An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ" (10). That is who we are, or who we should be.

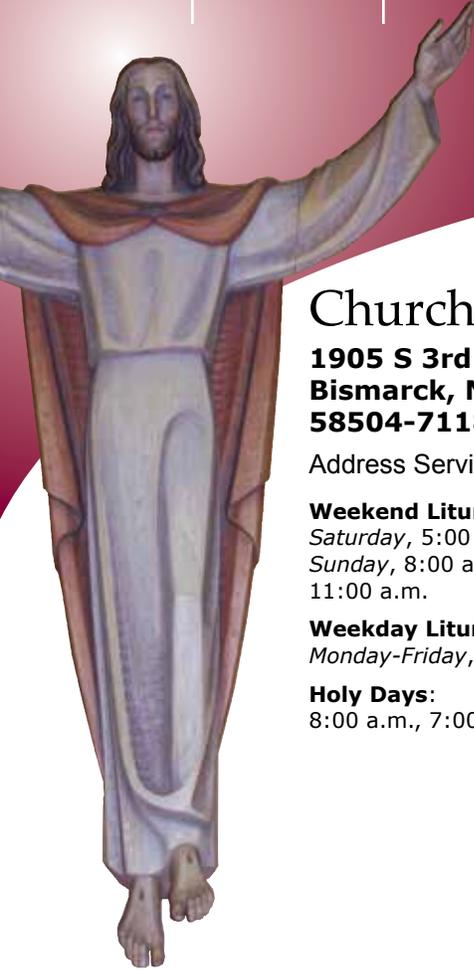




# Sharing in Prayer and Fellowship Through the Living Rosary

Our Ascension youth had the wonderful opportunity to share in prayer and fellowship, as they faithfully participated in the Living Rosary. We thank all who took part in this beautiful community prayer.





Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit #164  
Bismarck, ND

## Church of the Ascension

**1905 S 3rd St  
Bismarck, ND  
58504-7118**

Address Service Requested

### **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.

## Meet Beth Kathol *continued from front cover*

as the generous contributions of our parishioners,” Beth says. “Some big ticket projects we face are a new church roof and a new parking lot. Along with Msgr. Braaten and the Finance Council, I hope to be able to use our resources wisely towards these projects.”

Further, she will also help our parish continue to bloom into the beautiful community God has created it to be.

“I am really looking forward to encouraging and enabling the staff and parishioners to use their God-given gifts so the parish can continue to grow and flourish,” she says. “I am also looking forward to getting to know more of our parishioners.”

In all, Beth is truly grateful to be part of our faith community, and feels blessed to be in her new position.

“Not only do I love that Ascension Parish is incredibly warm and welcoming, but the parishioners here are also very committed,” Beth says. “Basically, all of the committees, organizations and ministries are organized and led by parishioners, demonstrating a high amount of engagement and ownership of the parish. It is very encouraging and uplifting to witness. Ascension has a lot of dedicated parishioners — some who have been here since its inception in 1974. The parish has a ‘small town’ feel to it, like a real community and family.”

***“Not only do I love that Ascension Parish is incredibly warm and welcoming, but the parishioners here are also very committed... It is very encouraging and uplifting to witness. Ascension has a lot of dedicated parishioners — some who have been here since its inception in 1974. The parish has a ‘small town’ feel to it, like a real community and family.” — Beth Kathol***

**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.