

# CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## Adult Altar Servers Helping Make Funerals Easier for Families

Though it is one of the most beautiful rites within the Church, a funeral Mass can also be one of the toughest moments that a family will face. It takes a special person to step in and volunteer to help make sure the Mass goes off seamlessly so that all the family needs to think about is healing.

At Ascension, those special people are the adult altar servers. Working specifically during funerals, the adult altar servers volunteer their time when a parishioner passes away.

"We have volunteer adult servers that get things ready for the funeral along with Monsignor – he has a checklist which he gives to us, and it tells us what he wants done before the funeral," explains altar server Pete Baumgartner. "We make sure the pall is out on the back pews so that the funeral director can pick it up for the family to lay on top of the coffin. All the candles along with the Easter candle are to be lit. Then we set up the altar and make sure the gifts that are going to be brought up are in the back of the church."



*(From left) Linda Charbonneau and Pete Baumgartner volunteer as adult altar servers for funerals held at Ascension. Having served for the last 12 years, Pete says it is a way to help families during a tough time.*

Joined by fellow servers Linda Charbonneau and Bob Scherr, Pete also prepares the items for the Eucharist, such as the wash bowl and the chalice, and makes sure Monsignor has what he needs for the Mass.

*continued on back cover*

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*July 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016*

**MARCH 2017**

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# Feast of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary

## March 19

Devotion to St. Joseph began relatively late in Church history, primarily because his role of husband to Mary and head of the Holy Family was underplayed in early Christianity by many unauthenticated legends of Christ's childhood. These legends almost always portrayed Joseph as an old man, a simple guardian of Mary and Jesus.

Modern theology places Joseph in a much more important position. Because of his valid marriage to Mary, Joseph shared in Mary's parenthood – Joseph was a father to Jesus in every way except biological. Joseph appeared publicly as the natural father of Jesus, thus shielding the virginity of Mary and the reputation of Jesus. Joseph's fatherly love, authority and watchful service were all necessary circumstances in God's plan for the Incarnation.

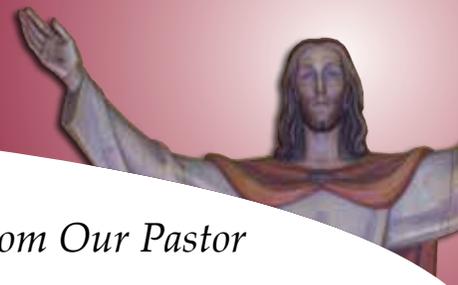
Joseph was born in Judea or Galilee in the first century B.C. Little is stated in the Bible about the influence Joseph

had on Jesus. History tells us that he brought Mary and Jesus to the temple each Passover and taught Jesus the carpentry trade. He seems to be the silent family man who shows his love for his family by providing them with security. The very safety of Mary and Jesus was guarded by Joseph when he took his family into Egypt to avoid the massacre of male babies ordered by King Herod.

In the history of the Church, Western veneration of Joseph began with the introduction of the Feast of St. Joseph in the late 15th century.

In 1870, at the end of the First Vatican Council, Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph to be the patron of the Universal Church. He is also the patron of carpenters, workers, fathers, and a happy death given that he died in the presence of Mary and Jesus. The title of Joseph's March 19 feast day is "Husband of Mary." Pope Pius XII later declared May 1 to be the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, to counteract the Communist May Day holiday.





*A Letter from Our Pastor*

# Lent Is More Than Preparation for Easter

Dear Parishioners,

**I**n 2013, Pope Francis issued his first significant work. It was what is called an “apostolic exhortation” titled *The Joy of the Gospel* (*Evangelii Gaudium* in Latin). While Rome may use fancy words for some of these things, an “exhortation” of this sort does not change any official Church rules or traditions. However, it does offer advice and encouragement about how we should live our lives.

Pope Francis offers this kind of guidance on a regular basis, but this one in particular seems to present us with suggestions that are worthy of our consideration, especially during Lent. The pope called us to become missionary disciples: “The Church which ‘goes forth’ is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 24).

Speaking about his exhortation, Pope Francis said, “One of the riches of the Second Vatican Council was to remind the Church of the two ‘lenses’ of the season of Lent: baptismal and penitential.” In fact, Vatican II noted specifically, “The two elements which are especially characteristic of Lent – the recalling of baptism or the preparation for it, and penance – should be given greater emphasis in the liturgy and in liturgical catechesis. It is by means of them that the Church prepared the faithful for the celebration of Easter, while they hear God’s word more frequently and devote more time to prayer” (*Companion to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1348).

It might be well for us to keep these in mind during Lent. There were vows made during our baptism, and

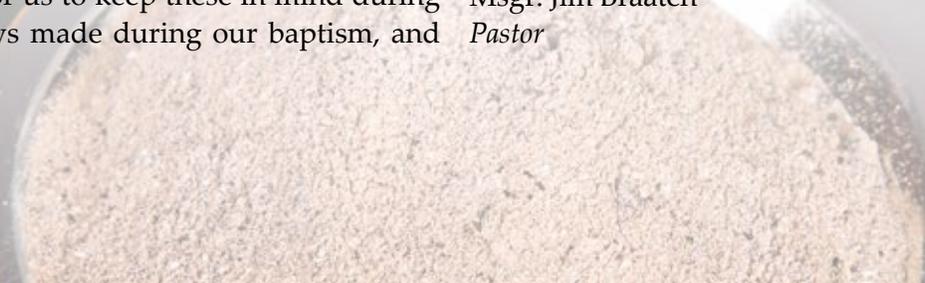
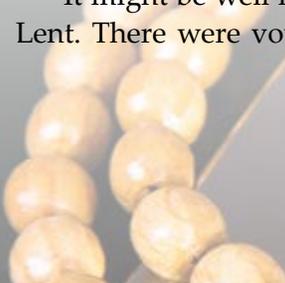
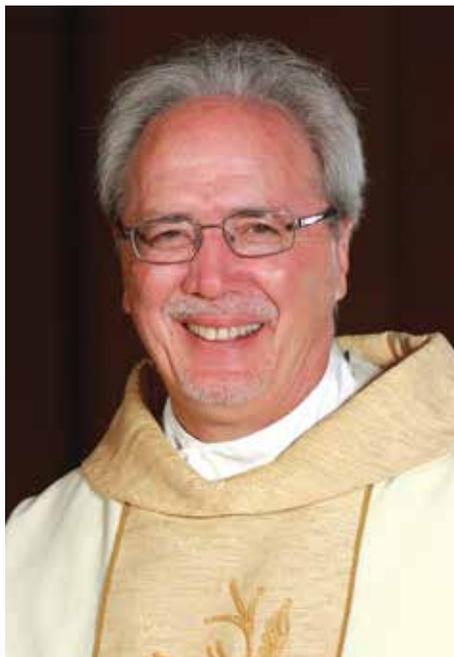
this is the time of year to try to fulfill those vows, in addition to reaffirming them. We are given various opportunities to renew these vows, and we may tend to do it automatically without a thought. Now, however, is the time to think. Perhaps during Lent, we can renew these vows as families – and we must not necessarily do it in church or at a Mass. Then, we need to do something during Lent to help each of us understand what that renewal means.

The other important part of Lent pointed out by Pope Francis has to do with penance. Most of us have heard the traditional practices of Lent – fasting, prayer, reception of the Sacraments, and almsgiving. These are things that may bring us closer to Christ. By fasting, we may gain a greater understanding of the hunger the Lord feels for our souls; by increased prayer, we join in union with God; through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, we become a greater part of that union with God; through giving alms, we empty ourselves in part, just as Jesus emptied Himself for us on the cross.

This is a time to do more than prepare for Easter. This is a time to change how we may approach living and our faith. God bless you now and throughout this holiest of seasons.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten  
Pastor





## Sealed with the Holy Spirit Confirmation Preparation

**D**ifferent images come to mind when reflecting on the final Sacrament of Initiation. Maybe you remember the bishop giving you a “tap” on the cheek, as a reminder to be willing to suffer for Christ. Perhaps the scent of chrism, in the sign of a cross on your forehead, is one you’ll never forget. Or maybe picking a sponsor or a Confirmation saint was a decision that you thought long and hard about. But regardless of what stands out in your mind, when you received the Sacrament of Confirmation, you were anointed with oil, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and fully initiated into the Catholic Church.

Each year, a group of young people from our parish join the ranks of the fully initiated, receiving the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. The process to prepare for this sacrament happens over three years, beginning in seventh grade, and continuing until the young people receive the sacrament in the spring of their ninth-grade year. The time of preparation seeks to help the young people learn about their faith, and encourages them to embrace it personally.

“I hope that they’re coming away more secure and knowledgeable in their faith,” says Beth Kathol,

our Director of Faith Formation, who coordinates the Confirmation program. “Equal to that, I hope they come away with the sense that faith is a personal encounter, truly experiencing a relationship with Christ and feeling that He is a central part of their lives.”

To help achieve these goals, the Confirmation Preparation program uses the *Chosen* series from Ascension Press. This video series is designed to help engage the young people in their faith, showing them its relevance in everyday life, as well as eternity. Along with the video teachings, the youth also participate in small groups, which give them the chance to discuss their faith and share their thoughts with peers, as well as young adult mentors/small-group leaders.

In addition, the young people participate in service opportunities and retreats, and are given guides to regular “conversations” with their Confirmation sponsors, encouraging them to foster meaningful dialogue about the faith.

Beth hopes that the Confirmation process will not only be valuable for those preparing to receive the sacrament, but also for their sponsors.



*The Confirmation candidates and their sponsors participate in a retreat in preparation for receiving the sacrament.*



*The sponsors play an invaluable role in helping young people prepare to be confirmed, walking alongside them in their journey of faith.*



# The Holy Spirit *Confirmation at Ascension*

“The purpose of the retreat and the ‘conversations’ is not only for the candidates to grow, but also for the sponsors to be renewed in their faith,” Beth says. “Sponsors evangelize their students through their personal experience and witness.

“We really want students to prayerfully consider who they want as their sponsor,” she adds. “A sponsor’s role is two-fold – someone who serves as a role model for them, for this time and hopefully the rest of their life. This person is also a one-on-one support system.”

Becky Mastel is a parishioner who serves as a Confirmation Team small group leader, as well as a sponsor for her cousin, who is preparing for Confirmation.

“They’re at such an important age where they can really start owning their faith,” Becky says. “I was about their age when I really started to find my faith and live it out.

“Confirmation gave me time to really reflect on what the Church teaches,” she adds. “Every young person should have that opportunity to discover it for his or herself.”

Becky also believes that the small groups help to facilitate the development of Catholic friendships, which she has found invaluable to practicing her own faith.

“I think it’s one of the most important things, when it comes to living out your faith – you’ve got to have those strong friendships that are going to encourage you along the way,” Becky says. “I hope they continue to rely on Confirmation friends and

other Catholic friends and the small-group leaders as a support system.”

For Becky and the others who serve on the Confirmation Team, or as a sponsor, it is a chance to grow deeper in their faith, while walking alongside a young person on the journey, and being encouraged about the future of the Church.

“I love to see how excited these young people are about their faith – they’re excited to learn and it gives me hope,” Becky says. “It has been inspiring. They’re asking questions, they’re curious and some of the questions they ask have been challenging. It allows me to dive into my faith and think of aspects I haven’t necessarily thought of before. To hear those hard questions and help find answers for them – it’s helped me in my faith.”

Beth encourages parishioners to consider serving the young people of our parish as a Confirmation small-group leader.

“This is for anyone who has a strong desire to work with youth and wants to have a refresher in their own faith,” she says. “A good small-group leader is someone who is not afraid to share and have real conversations about the faith with young people. You don’t have to know everything or be a teacher, just have that desire to share.”

“It’s such a rewarding experience to see the students start to understand the different aspects of the Church and why we believe what we believe,” Becky adds. “As a small-group leader, you will also definitely see how you can learn from the young people going through the process. It’s a very rewarding experience, and you also get to grow from it.”

If you would like more information on preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, or if you are interested in serving as a small-group leader on the Confirmation team, please contact Beth Kathol at 701-258-5692 or [bkathol@ascensionbismarck.org](mailto:bkathol@ascensionbismarck.org).

Please remember and pray for our 24 Confirmation candidates, who will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation on Friday, May 5, at 7 p.m.



# Stewardship in Action!

Ascension parishioners helped serve The Banquet at Trinity Lutheran on February 23rd. We served 380 people in need. Thank you to everyone who helped make it a success!



## Upcoming Events:

**Stations of the Cross:**  
Every Friday at 5:30 p.m.

**KC's Fish Fry:**  
Every Friday from 5-7 p.m.

**Faith Formation Grill-out:**  
March 29th - 4:30-6:45



# Church of the Ascension Financial Report

## July 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Cash in Bank	\$	129,714.35	
Investment-Expansion Fund		230,424.97	
Accounts Receivable		7,781.74	
Pre-paid Expense		<u>460.01</u>	\$ 368,381.07
Building		1,718,817.74	
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment		<u>406,148.48</u>	
<b><u>TOTAL ASSETS:</u></b>			<b><u>\$2,124,966.22</u></b>
Accounts Payable			1,095.76
<b><u>TOTAL NET ASSETS:</u></b>			<b><u>\$2,494,443.05</u></b>

### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

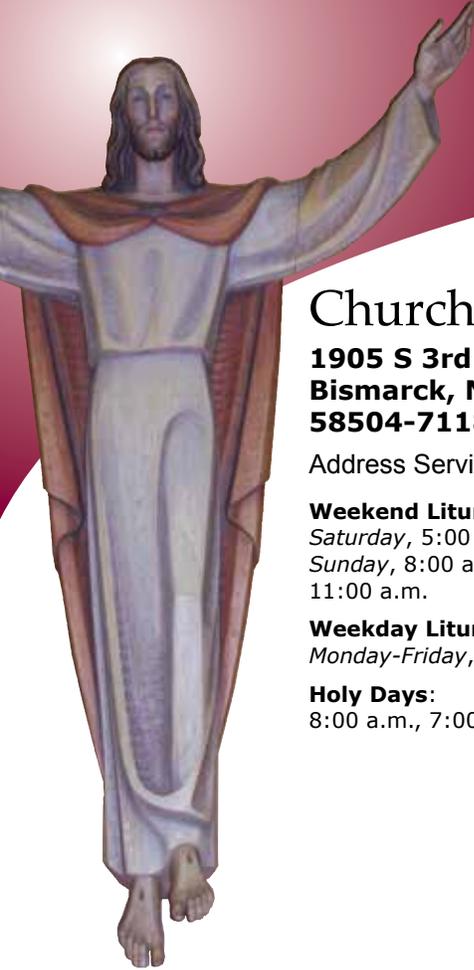
<b><u>Income:</u></b>		<b><u>Expenses:</u></b>	
Sunday Contributions	\$333,218.77	Payroll, Payroll taxes & emp. ben. (4 Full-time/5 Part-time)	\$136,948.60
Special Donations	11,033.88	Parochial School Support	138,983.22
Faith Formation Income	13,758.00	Building Operating Costs	40,971.04
SMCHS Carnival	.00	Office Operations	16,358.64
BACEF	20,843.89	Missalettes, Newsletter, Printing	16,984.02
Casey Trust Fund	4,825.26	Education Programs	5,420.84
Miscellaneous Income	7,699.10	Stewardship Program	15,960.75
Interest Income	<u>1,250.79</u>	Other Expenses (Cemetery, Youth, Parish, Social etc.)	<u>9,467.91</u>
<b><u>Operating Income</u></b>		<b><u>Operating Expense</u></b>	
	<b><u>392,629.69</u></b>		<b><u>381,095.02</u></b>
Offerings for Maintenance	13,879.00	Maintenance Fund Expenses	13,774.49
Offerings for the Poor	<u>21,544.50</u>	Poor Fund Donations	<u>9,141.00</u>
	<u>35,423.50</u>		<u>22,915.49</u>
<b><u>TOTAL INCOME</u></b>		<b><u>TOTAL EXPENSES</u></b>	
	<b><u>\$428,053.19</u></b>		<b><u>\$404,010.51</u></b>

## Poor Fund Donations

*July 1, 2016 - December 31, 2016*

Abused Adult Resource Center	\$ 433.00
AID Inc.	2,165.00
Community Action	2,165.00
Meals on Wheels	175.00
Ministry on the Margins	346.00
Ronald McDonald House	346.00
Salvation Army	2,165.00
Welcome House	866.00
Rides to Mass	<u>480.00</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 9,141.00</b>





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## 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.*

## Adult Altar Servers Helping Make Funerals Easier for Families *continued from front cover*

"Msgr. Jim does a great job of having us check everything," Pete says. "It's a delight to work with him."

Having served in the role for the past 12 years, Pete says readying the church for a funeral has almost become second nature, and the biggest part of the job is simply talking to people, answering their questions, and helping direct family members who might have a role in the Mass.

"I've been a Eucharistic Minister for 30 years and I used to be an usher," Pete says. "As time went on, Fr. Klemmer asked me if I would be an altar server for

funerals and I said yes. I like doing it and I like working with the people who are there and the parish staff."

While Pete admits that serving at a funeral isn't for everyone, he sees it as a simple act of mercy that can help a family during the most difficult of times.

"For me, I've always liked people – I like working with and visiting with people, and I think that makes a difference, too," he says. "A lot of times, the families are so appreciative of the church making sure someone is there to help with all this. They come and they compliment Linda or Bob and myself, thanking us for what we do. It's been really rewarding."

If you would like more information on the adult altar servers for funerals, please contact Pete Baumgartner at 701-226-8556.

**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.