

# CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## Raising Up Laborers for His Harvest Through the Vocations Committee

**Y**ou have probably noticed the insert in the parish bulletin that includes the names of diocesan seminarians, priests, deacons, or religious to pray for each day of the following month, as well as the dates of some of their birthdays or ordination days. And, likely, you have graciously taken the time to pray for them. Yet, you may not know who makes up this handy insert, or realize what a powerful and critical impact your response to it really has.

The insert is made up by the Vocations Committee, a group at our parish that obtains and distributes information to promote vocations to

the priesthood, religious life and the diaconate. Its members give their time and talent to promote and encourage prayer for vocations. At this time, its members include Coordinators Michael and Julie Luger, Mark and Sharon Malm, Leota Neigum, and, Jan Sitter.

In addition to putting together this insert, the committee – in conjunction with the parish staff – does something special for our Pastor each October in honor of Priesthood Sunday. For example, in the past, they have given Monsignor a meaningful spiritual bouquet.

“Serra Club International appreciates having Vocation Committees at parishes so they can work through them if there is something they would like to do to promote vocations,” Julie says. “Vocations are important to pray for. It is a ministry that is close to our heart because our son, Deacon Greg Luger, is going to be ordained to the priesthood

**PRIESTS, BROTHERS, NUNS.  
THEY NEED US.  
WE NEED THEM.**



*Vocations Are  
Everybody's Business*

### Inside this Issue

- 2 Formation  
*Transformed Through Christ*
- 3 We Cannot Be  
Part-Time Christians
- 4 Looking Forward to  
the Priestly Ordination  
of Deacon Gregory  
Luger
- 6 Celebrating the  
Coronation of Mary  
*The May Crowning*
- 7 BACEF: Supporting  
Catholic Education All  
Year Long

**MAY 2017**

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

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# Formation *Transformed Through Christ*

*"Jesus not only calls people to him but also forms them and sends them out in his service."  
– Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*

This month, we are emphasizing the third Pillar of Parish Stewardship – Formation. Formation is the process of studying Christ's teachings and incorporating them deeply into our lives. It is a lifelong effort by which we "put on Christ" (Rom 13:14) and are "transformed by the renewal of our minds" (Rom 12:2).

Above all, our formation should include studying Scripture and Church teaching. It should also include discussion with other Catholics and honest self-assessment. Its goal is to "discern the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect" (Rom 12:2).

Because formation helps us understand God's will, it therefore leads naturally to good stewardship. When our minds are transformed through Christ, we become like him – as Christ gave His life for us, so we give our lives to others.

Formation is not just an individual task. Instead, it is a communal responsibility that, when applied, will further help us to grow as a stewardship parish. Each one of us has an inherent need to give – to move from "selfishness to selflessness," as the Diocese of Wichita's document *The Pillars*



*of Parish Stewardship* aptly states. Formation is a process of spiritual growth, and it leads to a deeper understanding of loving others as God loves us.

Naturally, then, our Catholic formation should not end upon celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation, or turning 18 years old. Formation is a formidable task that we as Catholics should participate in for the duration of our lives. It involves "education of the mind and conversion of the heart" (*The Pillars of Parish Stewardship*), and helps us to lead the stewardship way of life rather than just understand it.

Start off by reading 10 minutes of Sacred Scripture a day, or by studying a chapter of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on a daily basis. Read a biography of your favorite saint for an example of an individual who lived as a disciple of Christ, and use this person as a role model when tending to your daily tasks. Keep an eye on our weekly parish bulletin for faith formation opportunities at the parish. Before long, your commitment to formation will lead you to naturally live the Catholic faith and understand stewardship in ways that you never imagined before.



*A Letter from Our Pastor*

# We Cannot Be Part-Time Christians

Dear Parishioners,

**M**ay is traditionally celebrated in the Church as the month of Mary, our Blessed Mother. As the Mother of the Church, she provides us with an example of what it means to be a servant of God and our fellow humans, as well as how to obediently fulfill the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

As Catholics, we are called to model the life of Jesus. That can be difficult, and there are certainly challenges to living as a disciple of Christ. But living stewardship and discipleship brings intense contentment and joy to those who take that risk. As we hear in St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "All things work for good for those who love God."

After Jesus Himself, we look to our Blessed Mother as an ideal steward and an example of what stewardship means. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her life and her ministry in a total spirit of faithfulness and service. She responded to the call to be a disciple. For us to be disciples, we also need to be good stewards of the gifts we have received. Our Church and our parish are gifts to us from God.

At no point in Holy Scripture does Jesus tell us that following Him is easy. We know it is not always simple and effortless. It requires dedication and commitment. Pope Francis has said on more than one occasion, "We cannot be part-time Christians and Catholics! We should seek to live our faith at every moment of every day."

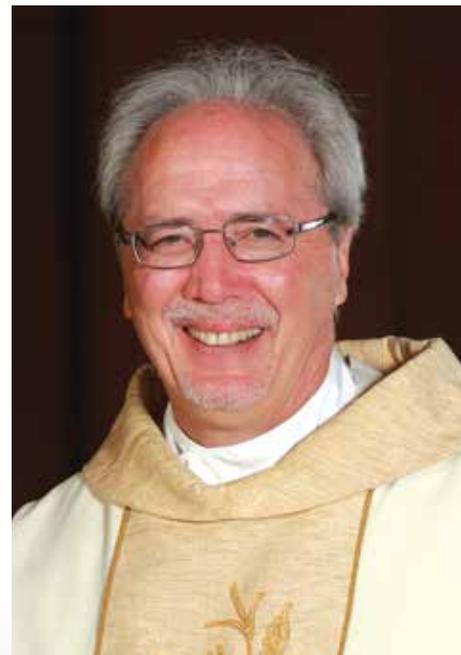
I suspect that is how Mary lived her life from that moment she turned it over to God and His Will. So, let us vow together during this month of Mary to follow her example, and seek to be the kinds of good stewards that will make our faith community even stronger and more effective.

I pray that we all can find the strength to live and practice our faith as we should. This means being faithful to the sacraments and looking for ways to help and serve one another. We have a great parish – let us make it even greater.

As we hear in Holy Scripture, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). Pray for me, as I pray for you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten  
*Pastor*



# Looking Forward to the Priestly Or

On May 31, Deacon Gregory Luger will courageously lay down his life for the sake of Christ and His Church in an extraordinary way. After he is ordained, he will be a priestly servant of the Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ forever, and his life will revolve around loving Him wholeheartedly.

Deacon Gregory Luger has been carefully preparing for this solemn commitment for eight years. Along with earning a Master of Divinity degree from Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis, which is standard for men being ordained to the priesthood, he is earning a Master of Arts degree as well, which is optional. The 60-page thesis for his M.A. Degree covered the topic, "Christian Education According to St. Augustine."

"We get to choose our own thesis topic, and I wanted to pick something that was very practical," he says. "I really have a passion for education, so I figured I should write something about it, and who better to refer to than St. Augustine!"

Since last fall, Deacon Greg has thoroughly enjoyed "putting his hands to the plow" and fulfilling his pre-ordination pastoral year of service at St. Gerard Majella Catholic Church in Kirkwood, Mo.

"I enjoy applying the theology I have learned and being involved in the parish as a deacon," he says. "I have preached at Sunday Masses, baptized



*Deacon Gregory Luger sitting on top of a small cave on the Mount of Beatitudes. It is in this spot where Jesus likely gave the Sermon on the Mount.  
(Photo by Deacon Ron Lorilla)*

several children, and taught some classes. I even had the opportunity to lead a Bible study on the passion narrative of St. John."

Providentially, Deacon has received a loving welcome and ongoing support from the people of St. Gerard Majella.

"The lay faithful of the parish have shown me so much support and gratitude," he says. "They are very affirming of me, particularly after I preach. Since I am there to preach the Gospel to the parish, their attitude indicates to me that they are very receptive to the Gospel message."

In January, Deacon Greg further prepared his heart and soul for his ordination by going on a canonical five-day retreat in the Holy Land (Israel). He enjoyed spending time at a beautiful retreat center located on the Mount

of the Beatitudes, and visiting sites such as the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Looking back, Deacon Greg is deeply grateful for all of those who helped to nurture his vocation to the priesthood.

"I have been blessed by many great priests in my life that have fostered my faith, as well as my vocation," he says. "Furthermore, my parents brought me up in the Church and provided me with a good education and upbringing. I am grateful for all that I have received

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"O loving Mother Mary, Mother of Priests, take to your heart your sons who are close to you because of their priestly ordination and because of the power which they have received to carry on the work of Christ in a world which needs them so much. Be their comfort, be their joy, be their strength..." – *A Prayer for Priests by John Cardinal O'Connor*



# Ordination of Deacon Gregory Luger

from them, as well as from my education at St. Mary's Grade School, Cathedral School, and St. Mary's High School in Bismarck."

And, looking to the future, he is filled with an impressive zeal to serve the people of our diocese as a priest of God.

"I am really looking forward to finally being a priest," he says. "I have been in formation for a long time. I am happy to be getting into the priestly ministry, and excited to say Mass, hear Confessions, preach the Gospel, and minister to the people. I am thankful I'll be serving in the Diocese of Bismarck because it has such great priests to work alongside. Their witness and their work is something to look forward to in and of itself!"



*Deacon Gregory Luger with Deacon Drew Hoffman (Diocese of Wichita) and Deacon Scott Schilmoeller standing in the Sea of Galilee. (Photo by Deacon Nicolas Mishek)*

*All parishioners are warmly invited to attend Deacon Gregory Luger's First Mass on June 1, 2017, at 10:30 a.m. at the Church of Ascension.*



*Deacon Gregory Luger and classmates praying at the Holy Sepulchre, the precise place where Jesus was buried before He rose. (Photo by Deacon Paul Clark)*



*The Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth – the white altar is where the Incarnation took place. There is a Latin inscription that reads "Et Verbum caro hic factum est" – "And the Word was made flesh here." (Photo by Deacon Ron Lorilla)*



# Celebrating the Coronation of Mary

## *The May Crowning*

**F**or many Catholics, May Crownings of statues or icons of the Blessed Mother have become rites of spring. Like flowers blooming or Mother's Day, this annual Marian devotion reminds us that the cold of winter is behind us, and it ushers in a month during which the Catholic Church pays special homage to Mary as the Queen of Heaven and Mother of God.

Generally taking place during the first weekend of the month, May Crownings bring children – often, recent First Communicants – out in their Sunday best to participate in processions and adorn statues of the Blessed Mother with crowns of flowers or actual gold crowns. Additionally, the children often place roses at her feet, and Catholics carry out similar practices in their homes by placing roses around statues of the Blessed Virgin, or even adding ornamentation to images of Mary. But where did this practice come from, and how did it develop into the tradition that we currently know and love?

The Coronation of Mary had been a popular subject in European art and literature for centuries, but the tradition of the May Crowning can be most accurately traced back to the late 16th century. Perhaps inspired by the practice of adding ornamentation to Marian icons that had been carried out by some Eastern churches, Pope Clement VIII added two crowns to the icon

of Mary with the Infant Jesus in the St. Mary Major Basilica in Rome. The crowns were eventually lost, but were replaced by Gregory XVI in 1837 in a rite that was to become the standard practice for crowning.

While the May Crowning is not an official liturgical celebration on the Church calendar, it is an important practice in honoring Mary as the Queen of the Universe, and its imagery is especially influential in the faith formation of children. As Liz Kelly writes in *May Crowning, Mass, and Merton and Other Reasons I Love Being Catholic*,

“One of the defining aspects of being Catholic is devotion to Mary. I favor no Marian celebration more highly than May Crowning, the feast that recognizes Mary as queen of heaven and earth. To a person of any age, this is a mighty big title, but to a child of five or six or seven, it expands to enchanting, magical proportions. How many queens does one get a chance to meet in a lifetime, much less crown?”

This year, make a special effort to honor the coronation of Mary through participation in a personal or public May Crowning devotion.

### *Bring Flowers of the Rarest*




*Bring flow'rs of the fairest,  
Bring flow'rs of the rarest,  
From garden and woodland  
And hillside and vale;  
Our full hearts are swelling,  
Our glad voices telling  
The praise of the loveliest  
Rose of the vale.*

*O Mary! we crown thee with blossoms today,  
Queen of the Angels, Queen of the May,  
O Mary! we crown thee with blossoms today,  
Queen of the Angels, Queen of the May.*

# BACEF: Supporting Catholic Education All Year Long

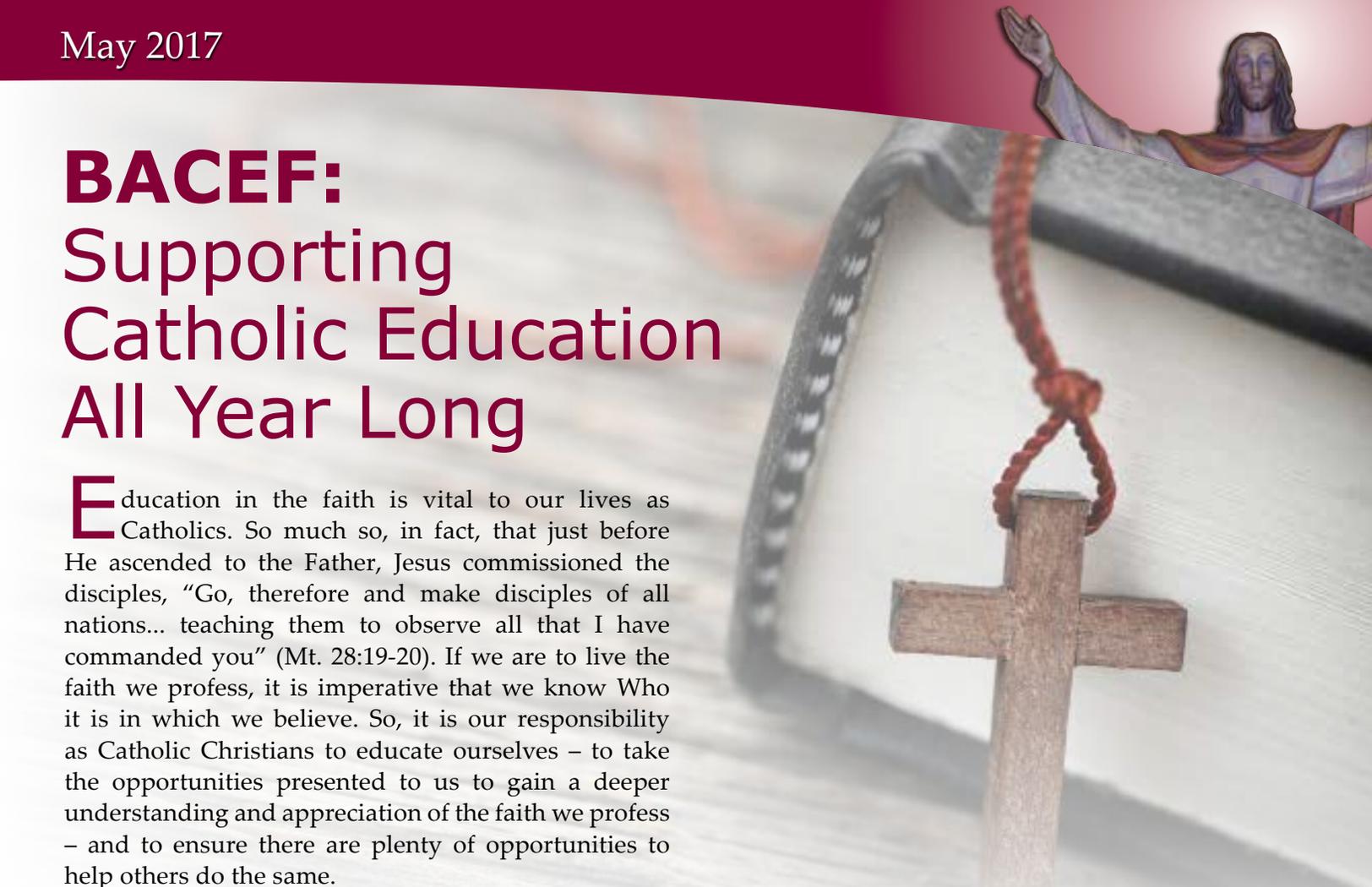
**E**ducation in the faith is vital to our lives as Catholics. So much so, in fact, that just before He ascended to the Father, Jesus commissioned the disciples, "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19-20). If we are to live the faith we profess, it is imperative that we know Who it is in which we believe. So, it is our responsibility as Catholic Christians to educate ourselves – to take the opportunities presented to us to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the faith we profess – and to ensure there are plenty of opportunities to help others do the same.

In this spirit, the Bismarck Area Catholic Education Foundation, or BACEF, works to raise money to support the educational opportunities at the parishes all over Bismarck.

"The purpose of the foundation is to provide ongoing financial support in the light of Christ, for both parochial education as well as for the faith formation at parishes themselves," says James Foertsch, our Parish Manager who serves as our parish representative on the foundation. "All the money that we raise is used for faith formation activities."

At the end of each calendar year, the BACEF runs an investment drive during which they ask parishioners as all Catholic parishes throughout Bismarck to invest in the faith formation of our Catholic family. The group, which consists of at least one representative from every parish in Bismarck, meets about eight times a year to discuss how the money could best be used and how the foundation can work to better support faith formation in the future.

"The money all goes back into the parishes – every bit of it," James says. "They are simply told that it must be used for faith formation – that includes both children and adult formation. Really, the money helps us to build a variety of opportunities for people to come to know Christ throughout the Bismarck area."

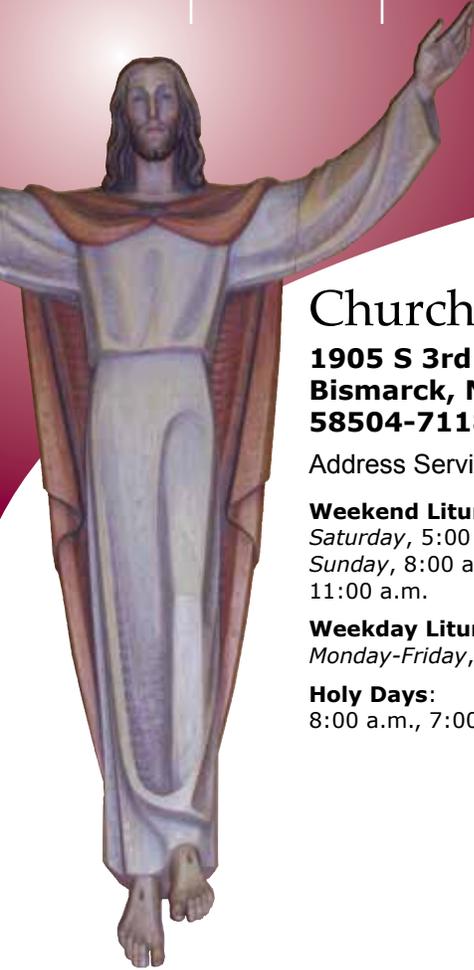


*"The purpose of the foundation is to provide ongoing financial support in the light of Christ, for both parochial education as well as for the faith formation at parishes themselves. All the money that we raise is used for faith formation activities." – James Foertsch, Parish Manager*

James feels blessed to be a member of the foundation, and he takes the responsibility very seriously.

"Education is a core function of the Catholic faith," James says. "It is important for us to take and promote opportunities to learn about everything God has given us."

As the school year draws to a close and many of our faith formation programs take a break for the summer, let us all keep in mind the vital role faith formation plays in the handing on of the faith. Consider how God may be calling you to support the faith formation efforts of our community in the coming year, and take the opportunity to support it!



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## Church of the Ascension

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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.*

## Raising Up Laborers for His Harvest Through the Vocations Committee *continued from front cover*

on May 31. Vocations are special to us, and we like to be involved in this ministry so we can enhance them, as well as help out at our parish. We want to give back to God for all He has given us."

On April 21, 2013, Pope Francis made this beautiful comment: "Behind and before every vocation to the priesthood or to the consecrated life, there is always the strong and intense prayer of someone: a grandmother, a grandfather, a mother, a father, a community... This is why Jesus said: 'Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest,' that is, God the Father, 'to send out laborers into his harvest' (Mt 9:38). Vocations are born in prayer and from prayer; and only through prayer can they persevere and bear fruit."

Let us take our Holy Father's words to heart, and heed his call to help bring forth new laborers into the harvest which nourishes each one of our souls.

For more information on the Vocations Committee or how to join, please contact Julie Luger at 701-222-0382.



*"Loving God, the provider of all our needs, we, your faithful people, ask that you bless our parish and our Diocese with an increase of men and women for priestly and committed ministry."*

**– Prayer for Vocations by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops**



**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.