

# Spirit of Life

Parish Newsletter — March/April 2010

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## Fortitude an Important Lenten Virtue

Dear Parishioners,

Lent began mid-February, so we're well into this penitential season. And all of the ways you planned to practice prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during Lent are going smoothly – right? Just like all the resolutions we made back in January, I suppose.

That's one of the problems with us humans – our feelings come and go, so it's hard to maintain a commitment once the excitement of a particular event has gone away. That's why we shouldn't depend on our emotions to govern our lives; they are too fickle. We really shouldn't worry about our feelings. We cannot control them, usually they are neither morally good nor bad, but they are not constant.

While we recognize that we can't control feelings, we shouldn't allow ourselves to be controlled by them, either. When we have to make a choice, we need to consider the facts, ask God's guidance to discern the right, and then make our decision. Then we should resolve to follow through with that decision, even though we know we may not feel like it the next day, the next week, or the next month.



That perseverance comes from developing the virtue of fortitude. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1808) defines fortitude as “the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the

moral life.”

Your immediate reaction may be that the elements of your Lenten rule of life are too little to require something heroic sounding like fortitude. They're just minor things, like giving up a single half-hour television program a week to read the Bible, or something similar. But “the moral virtues are acquired by human effort,” the *Catechism* tells us (1804), although God's help is needed as well. They become habitual with repeated practice, and it is only through frequent use in small things that they get developed to be ready for great trials.

What's the easiest way to remind ourselves of our commitments even when the feelings that inspired them have gone away? The best way is to write them down. That way we have something to remind us of

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# Stewardship of the Cross

The liturgical year is such a gift to us. As we turn the pages of the calendar, reflecting on the life of Christ, we have the opportunity to consider the most sublime events in the history of mankind. Of these events, perhaps none is more beautiful and worthy of contemplation than the one we are about to commemorate: Jesus' sacrifice of Himself for us on the Cross.

It is fitting and at the same time paradoxical — fitting that God should do it because only an infinite God could rid us of the infinite debt we owed by our sin; paradoxical that He not only did it, but wanted to do it out of pure love for us, His lowly creatures. What is Jesus trying to show us by this? Even more staggering, what is He really asking when He exhorts us, in turn, to take up our cross and follow Him?

Jesus gave His life for the Church and gave it freely, and He calls us to do the same. While some of us may in fact give our entire lives for the Church, for most of us, this giving takes place by a series of daily actions, both large and small, of Christ-like, sacrificial love — specifically, by giving our time, talent, and treasure for the good of the Church. And yet, by joining these actions with His and our hearts with His Heart, we have the chance to participate in that very same sacrifice. This month, let us take the time to examine our hearts and actions in light of Jesus' as we journey with Him toward the Cross:

Jesus gave Himself unselfishly and excessively. Consider the manner of His sacrifice. One drop of Christ's blood would have been more than sufficient to save the entire human race, and yet Our Lord Jesus chose to shed every last bit. From start to finish, Jesus showed us by His passion that He wanted to do more than what was merely sufficient. If there was more He could give, He gave it. He never

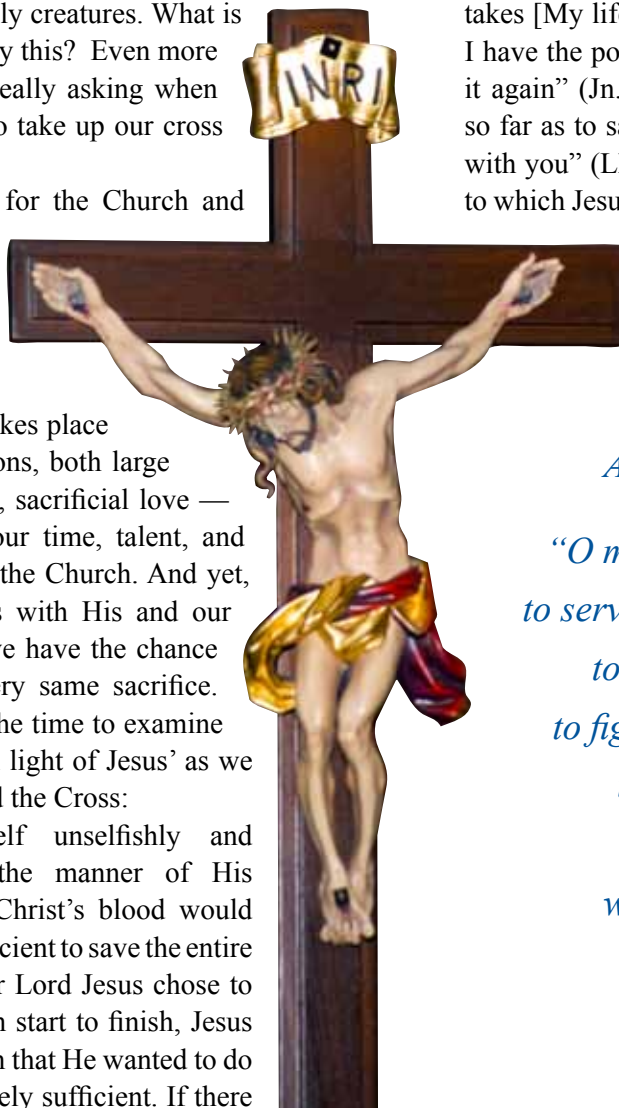
stopped to count the cost or to look for what He could get in return.

Jesus made His sacrifice a supreme act of love for the Church. Counter-cultural even to this day, Jesus actually upheld sacrifice as desirable — as the most perfect way to show our love: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn. 15:13). In His infinite wisdom, Jesus now offers this path to us as the way to holiness: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk. 9:23).

Jesus gave Himself willingly and even joyfully. “No one takes [My life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again” (Jn. 10:18). At the first Eucharist, Jesus even went so far as to say, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you” (Lk. 22:15). Needless to say, the Passover sacrifice to which Jesus referred was not a symbolic one, but was in fact

His very Body and Blood He would give for us through the sacrifice of the Cross.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts more like Yours.



## *A Lenten Stewardship Prayer*

*“O my God, teach me to be generous:  
to serve You as You deserve to be served;  
to give without counting the cost;  
to fight without fear of being wounded;  
to work without seeking rest,  
and to spend myself  
without expecting any reward,  
but the knowledge that  
I am doing your Holy will.”*

*— St. Ignatius of Loyola*

# Contemporary and Catholic: Anthony Moore

**W**ho would have thought that just switching Mass times would make such a difference in one's faith life?

That's exactly what happened for Anthony Moore. When he started attending the 6 p.m. Mass every Sunday, he began to notice a change.

"When I was younger, I couldn't have cared less about my church and my faith," admits Anthony, a senior at Mandan High School. "But my freshman year I started going to LifeTeen Mass, and I met a bunch of friends and started helping out more and more in the church."

Soon, Anthony began serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Then, two summers ago, he, along with over 50 other youth from Spirit of Life, attended the Steubenville North Conference at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. The experience of worshipping, celebrating, and socializing with so many other enthusiastic young Catholics gave Anthony an even stronger faith.

"The most impressive thing about that experience was seeing how God changed my life there," he says. "I was seeing all those other teens who were so dedicated, and that was also where I went to adoration for the first time and started seriously praying."

That faith has begun to reach out and touch others in several ways. Last summer, Anthony went on the mission trip to Guatemala, where he was especially struck by the universality of the Catholic Church.

"We went to Guatemala last summer, and even though I didn't know any Spanish, I still knew exactly what was happening in Mass," he says.

Anthony has also been influenced by the example of Laura Just, our youth minister.

"Getting to know her through confirmation and her testimony made me want to think more about how I was living in my life," Anthony says. "I saw that I needed to grow deeper in my faith."

Anthony now helps instruct the younger children of the parish in Faith Formation classes, and he is also infusing his major hobby – skateboarding – with his faith through Servants of the Lord Skateboard Ministry, a group he started in 2008. Through this group, Anthony and others are bringing the message of God's love to one more area of our culture. See them in action at [myspace.com/servantsofthelordskates](http://myspace.com/servantsofthelordskates).

After graduation, Anthony hopes to attend the University of Mary and study Pastoral Counseling so that he, too,

can one day serve as a parish youth minister or as a priest – "whatever God wants me to do!" he says. He is already planning to join the LifeTeen Core Team – the group of adults who organize and lead LifeTeen events – next year.

As one of our younger parishioners, Anthony perfectly exemplifies the up-to-date enthusiasm of the parish.

"At Spirit of Life," he says, "We're so very contemporary – but so very Catholic."



# Growing in Grace: Preparing

"I hope that the First Communion you receive... will  
-Pope Bern

**F**or many of the Faith Formation students at Spirit of Life, the day of their First Communion is exactly what it should be – a time to discover the truly awesome love that God has for them.

"We want the children to know and experience God's huge love for them; that they are children of the King, and that God says, 'I have called you by name and you are mine!'" says Gina M. Griffin, Leader of Reconciliation and Eucharist Preparation. "Receiving Jesus into their hearts is one of the most precious gifts God can ever give to them!"

The children's journey towards receiving the Eucharistic Christ for the first time began last September and October. They attended four classes with their parents leading up to their First Reconciliation, which took place with Fr. Chad in November and December. Their souls cleansed by the healing power of the Sacrament of Penance, they were then ready to receive their First



Eucharist during a special Mass held at Spirit of Life on Feb. 28.

Each class included singing, followed by a time of religious education for the parents with parishioner Jay Griffin, while the children met with Gina and 17 small group leaders. The leaders

included parents, high school students, and other parishioner volunteers acting out Bible stories.

In January and February, the students continued meeting for the final four First Eucharist classes.

Utilizing a series named Together in Jesus, the class curriculum included learning about Scripture, the Sacraments, the basic Catholic prayers, Church doctrine, the liturgical year, and the components of Mass. The children learned stories from the Old and New Testaments that capture the theme of forgiveness and testify to Jesus' life, as well as His dying and rising again to take away the burden of our sins. As the primary educators of their children, parents also further their faith learning at home.



# g for First Holy Communion

be the beginning of a lifelong friendship with Jesus.”

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“It’s an honor to share Jesus’ stories of love and forgiveness with these children, so young and innocent,” says Gina. “I hope and pray that the seeds we plant now continue growing as they grow and learn more from their parents and Godparents. The children’s smiles and sparkling eyes (and puckered lips!) are contagious as they receive First Holy Communion!”

A heartfelt thank-you is given to our wonderful faith formation leaders for their dedication.

Children in second grade or above and at the age of being able to read and reason are welcome to enter our sacramental preparation program.

To sign up your child for classes, see our parish bulletin in August. If you don’t receive a letter regarding First Reconciliation/Eucharist, call the Parish Office at 663-1660. Classes begin in September and continue through February.

Let us pray for our First Communicants as they have now become stewards of God’s greatest gift – His own Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, beginning that beautiful lifelong friendship with Jesus, growing in grace and joy.



## Spirit of Life Children preparing for First Holy Communion

Cameron Backer	Madison Just
Rylee Berg	Quincy Kautzman
Ethan Berger	Anne Kesler
Lexis Bohe	Cambelle Kirchmeier
Christian Bondeson	James Larson
Taegan Buechler	Michael Lee-Meisch
Ian Dahners	Charlie Liffrig
Willow Daniel	Justin Mahlum
Jillian Dollinger	Austin Morrell
Cade Erickson	LaShae Nolz
Kyler Fiest	Logan Quinn
Jared Fitterer	Tyler Rath
August Fleck	Aaron Riopelle
Mariah Forster	Morgan Schlosser
Logan Fridgen	Joseph Schon
Hannah Fried	Derek Schreiner
Trey Geary	Levon Schulz
Elizabeth Geiger	Dawson Shipman
Olivia Geiger	Erik Solie
Elizabeth Goodhart	Abby Steffan
Jordan Griffin	Mia Steffes
Joshua Haag	Jager Stramer
Trey Haberlock	Macee VanVleet
Kyra Haff	Jaxon Voller
Jase Helgeson	Austin Wetzstein
Caden Hirschert	Braden Will
Kambree Jahner	Keane Zimmerman

# Saint of the Month: *St. Patrick*

**T**his month, we celebrate the feast of St. Patrick. Born in the year 385, Patrick grew up in the Roman province of Britain. He was captured at the age of 16 by Irish raiders, taken to Ireland and sold into slavery. And, despite the precarious nature of his captivity, Patrick managed to learn the language and customs of the Druid pagans who held him.

Throughout Patrick's captivity, the young saint would often turn to God in times of distress and need. Prayer became Patrick's refuge, and he would spend hours in conversation with God.

In all, Patrick remained in the hands of his captors for six long years. Then, in the summer of 407, he experienced a profound religious transformation. Commanded by God in a dream, Patrick was instructed to leave Ireland via the coast. There, on the rocky shores of the coast, sailors caught sight of Patrick and returned him to Britain and his family.

However, a short while later, Patrick experienced another profound dream. In the dream Patrick heard the cries of the Irish people, "We beg you, holy youth, to come and walk among us once more." And although it would be years before he returned to Ireland, the prophetic nature of Patrick's dream was inevitable.

Patrick was not destined to stay in Britain for long; he moved to continental Europe and began studying for the priesthood in a French monastery. In 432, Patrick was ordained a bishop and commissioned to take the Gospel to Ireland. He reached the Irish shores for a second time on March 25, 433. Patrick would spend the remainder of his life in Ireland, converting the Irish pagans for the next 30 years.

Patrick's legend spread far and wide, and by the grace of God, the saint converted thousands of Druids to the Catholic Faith. He built churches throughout Ireland and opened the eyes of ruthless barbarian kings to the grace and love of Christ. Legend has it that Patrick used an ordinary shamrock clover to explain the mystery of the Trinity to the uneducated Irish people. Other legends depict Patrick ridding the island of venomous snakes. However, scientists now know that snakes never inhabited the Emerald Isle. But the story symbolically sheds light on Patrick's evangelical mission – ridding Ireland of Pagan religions, the cross replaced the popular Druid serpent.



Today, 93 percent of Ireland is Catholic. We celebrate St. Patrick's Day on March 17, the day of his death. A holiday for all nations, St. Patrick's Day has become a universal opportunity to celebrate friendship and good fortune.

# Praying With Exuberance: *Praise Night*

**Y**ou may not know, but a group of parishioners at Spirit of Life continue a form of praise that goes back thousands of years.

Though Praise Nights, we continue a tradition of worshipping God with exuberance that goes all the way back to King David, “who came dancing before the LORD with abandon, as he and all the Israelites were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts of joy and to the sound of the horn.”

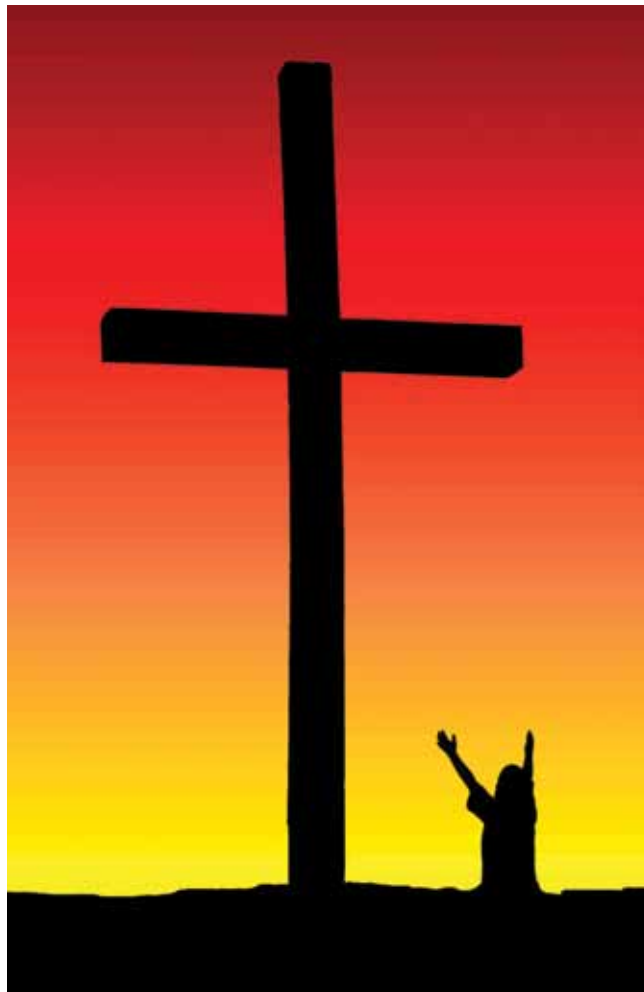
“Praise Nights are a time for our community to gather and enter into worship through song, spoken prayer and silence,” says Jay Griffin, a parishioner and our former Director of Music and Liturgy who continues to lend his talent to our music ministry.

They pray in a slightly different way from that of a normal Sunday Mass.

“Praise Nights provide a space and time to have more freedom in our worship of God than our weekend Eucharistic Liturgies,” Jay says. They include a wide variety of musical styles and forms of worship. Sometimes, there is Eucharistic Adoration, or priests or laypeople may share testimony. Whatever the format, there is one goal: praise.

And it’s a form of worship closer to that of King David and the Israelites before the ark.

“Participants seem to have a greater freedom to enter into the worship with both voice and body, with hands raised,



clapping, or praying in the Spirit,” Jay says.

While parish missions and LifeTeen have had different kinds of praise nights for several decades at Spirit of Life, it was only three years ago that a regularly scheduled Praise Night was begun.

Praise Nights are not a substitute for Sunday Mass, nor are they meant to suggest that something is missing from the Sunday liturgy.

They are a way for some parishioners to offer their God-given gifts, following St. Paul’s direction to the Romans: “Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them.” Like all prayer, Praise Nights are meant for God’s glory, not our own.

And Praise Nights also bring parishioners together in a closer community.

“The participants are made up of some of the core of our parish membership, and occasionally we even pray over and anoint those who are participating,” Jay says. Although the entire parish isn’t there, they pray for us all. “We pray for our parish, our parish leaders, those who are sick, for those who have died.”

Praise Night takes place on the third Thursday of each month from 7 to 8 p.m. To find out more, just show up, or call Jay at 701-663-1660.

**“Praise Nights are a time for our community to gather and enter into worship through song, spoken prayer and silence.”**

**-Jay Griffin, parishioner/former Director of Music and Liturgy**



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## Fortitude an Important Lenten Virtue *continued from front cover*

what we determined to do. So if you decided to attend weekday Mass every Wednesday during Lent, as one possible example, and a particular Wednesday you're extra tired and it's raining, having a written statement may be the best way to force yourself out of bed and into the Church.

The same practice will serve us well in other areas of life when we determine a particular course of action. It can apply to our Lenten rule of life, or our New Years resolutions, or our stewardship commitment. Writing them down helps us follow through, even when our feelings have gone away. And by the way, the traditional notable duties we try harder with during Lent fit in well with the main aspects of stewardship. We offer Time for prayer; we can fast from self-indulgence by serving others with our Talent; and we present our Treasure for almsgiving. Maybe our bishops were on to something when they identified stewardship as "a disciple's response" to what God gives.

Have a blessed Lent, and you'll have a joyous Easter.

In Christ,

Fr. Chad Gion  
Pastor