

# Spirit of Life

Parish Newsletter — May/June 2011

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## Welcoming Seminarian Joseph Evinger to Spirit of Life

**W**hen Joseph Evinger was 13 years old, his life began to change in a drastic way. As one of 10 children in a devout Catholic family living on a farm and ranch in western North Dakota, he experienced God's hand working in his life.

"The Lord started to stir my heart to become a better person, and maybe even a priest," Joseph says. "After four years of this stirring, and because of the respect my family had for priests, I realized I had to at least try out seminary life. My young heart was encouraged along by my parents' reverence for Mass and their devotion to First Friday Eucharistic Adoration."

With much support from family and friends, Joseph entered Cardinal Muench Seminary in Fargo, N.D., following his freshman year in college. Upon graduating from Cardinal Muench with a bachelor's degree in philosophy in 2009, the sense that he was called to the priesthood remained. He recently completed his second year of studies at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, during which he studied the sacraments, Ecclesiology, Greek, Homiletics, and Prophetic Literature.

"When I first arrived in Detroit, I found that life was different than I was used to,"



Joseph says. "Here, one has to worry about hitting a car on the road instead of a chicken!"

God willing, Joseph will be ordained to the diaconate for the Diocese of Bismarck on June 8, 2012, at Holy Spirit Cathedral.

"I love being a seminarian," Joseph says. "I have found my peace in life, and who I am meant to be. The Lord continues to stir my

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# Remembering St. Joseph on Father's Day

**B**elieve it or not, Father's Day wasn't recognized as a national holiday until 1966. History states that two women were the driving forces behind the establishment of Father's Day.

In 1908, Grace Golden Clayton suggested a day of paternal observance to her Methodist pastor. Ms. Clayton's request, sparked by a tragic West Virginia mine explosion, sought to honor the fathers who perished beneath the mountains during the blast.

Two years later, inspired by the popularity of Mother's Day, a Mrs. Sonora Smart Dodd of Spokane, Wash. pushed to establish a similar holiday honoring fathers. Mrs. Dodd was called to remember the selfless actions of her own father, Civil War veteran William Jackson Smart. Mr. Smart lovingly raised Sonora and her five siblings single-handedly after the death of his wife. The holiday was celebrated on June 19, 1910.

Today, Father's Day is celebrated on the third Sunday of June. During this celebration honoring all fathers, we are called to give thanks to the men who raised us, provided us with protection and support, and patiently watched as we stretched our wings for flight.

Fathers are notorious for their silent wisdom. They are the strong embrace daughters run to when in fear or sorrow, the righteous shoes sons attempt to fill when approaching manhood, and the unending catalogue of answers to life's hardest questions. A parish priest once likened fathers to the human skeleton – fundamental, yet often forgotten. Just as we



*A parish priest once likened fathers to the human skeleton – fundamental, yet often forgotten. Just as we rarely notice the stabilizing existence of our backbones, without the guidance of fathers and father-figures, we would lack the poise and dignity we enjoy because of their presence.*

rarely notice the stabilizing existence of our backbones, without the guidance of fathers and father-figures, we would lack the poise and dignity we enjoy because of their presence.

Consider the importance of Christ's earthly father, St. Joseph. When contemplating the Holy Family, St. Joseph doesn't hold the "celebrity status" of Jesus and Mary. Catholics everywhere hold special devotions to Mary, but what about St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse? Sadly, he often stands in the shadows of his wife and Child. But isn't that what fathers are supposed to do? A good dad provides his children with the necessary tools to succeed in life, and then steps aside, hoping and praying that they will lead a life better than his own. A good dad honors his wife and encourages her to shine in the virtue of her own femininity. A good dad follows in the footsteps of St. Joseph.

The gospels display the importance of St. Joseph with incredible clarity. As the earthly father of Christ, God chose St. Joseph, out of every other man in history, to raise His Son. St. Luke tells

us in his Gospel that Jesus "was obedient" to St. Joseph, and recognized him as His father (Lk 2:52). And to think that St. Joseph isn't even quoted in scripture!

This Father's Day, as you rush to the hardware store and grab your dad a gift certificate, consider the relationship Christ and St. Joseph shared. Cherish the silent love fathers hold for their children. Understand the honor they deserve, and recognize the blessed nature of their guidance and leadership.

A Letter From Our Pastor

# Embrace the Holy Spirit

Dear Parishioners,

**Y**ou've all heard homilies about Pentecost, which comes on June 12 this year. Pentecost was the day when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles while they were gathered for prayer in Jerusalem.



Coming 10 days after Jesus' Ascension into heaven, the descent of the Holy Spirit turned the apostles from a collection of fearful followers looking for some direction into a band of courageous witnesses ready to declare their faith in Christ to the whole world.

You've heard that Pentecost is the birthday of the Church, because that was the day when, newly filled with the Holy Spirit, St. Peter preached the first Christian sermon, inviting his listeners to turn to Jesus as their Savior and their Lord. Those who accepted the invitation were baptized and "were added" to the Church (Acts 2:41). That day marked the beginning of the Church's public mission, which continues to the present.

But the Holy Spirit's actions in the Church were not limited to the apostles in an ancient time. He remains active down to the present, guiding the pope and the bishops as they go about their work of sanctifying, teaching, and ruling in the Church. The Holy Spirit acts in the sacraments to make them effective signs of grace. We see the Holy Spirit's work in the witness of the saints, through whom He continues the work of salvation.

The Spirit, moreover, acts not only in the Church as a corporate body, but also in the lives of individual Christians. We become temples of the Holy Spirit at our baptism. Then, at Confirmation, which is our own personal Pentecost, we receive the seal of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit unites us more closely to Christ, increases the spiritual gifts we have been given, and strengthens us to spread and defend the Faith.

The point I'm trying to get across is that Pentecost is not merely a feast celebrating something that happened a long time ago. Of course, the coming of the Spirit we read about in Acts 2 took place just once. But the Holy Spirit remains active today, guiding the Church as a whole but also working in the life of each individual Christian to make us holy.

But, you say, you don't feel like the Holy Spirit is working in your life? Well, God the Father gave us free will, so we can choose whether or not we'll obey Him. And God the Holy Spirit, being united in the one Godhead with the Father and the Son, honors that freedom. He'll never force us to turn away from sin or compel us to obey God's commandments. The Spirit offers us grace. He will beckon us toward heaven, and occasionally we may feel Him nudging us along, but we always have the

freedom to choose God or to reject Him.

Perhaps you've made a commitment to worship at Mass at least weekly and spend some time each day in prayer. Maybe you have promised to use some of your talents in parish ministries and service to the community. You may even have turned in a card at our last Stewardship Renewal to indicate your pledge of a portion of your treasure to be used in God's service.

I hope you've done all of these. If so, both the Holy Spirit's grace and your response were involved in your decision. And the Holy Spirit will give you the strength to fulfill your commitments.

This Pentecost make the Gradual verse we'll sing just before the Gospel your personal prayer:

*Alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful; and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia.*

If you do, you'll find the Holy Spirit working even more strongly in your life. You'll be happier, and the world – at least your little corner of it – will be a better place.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. Chad Gion".

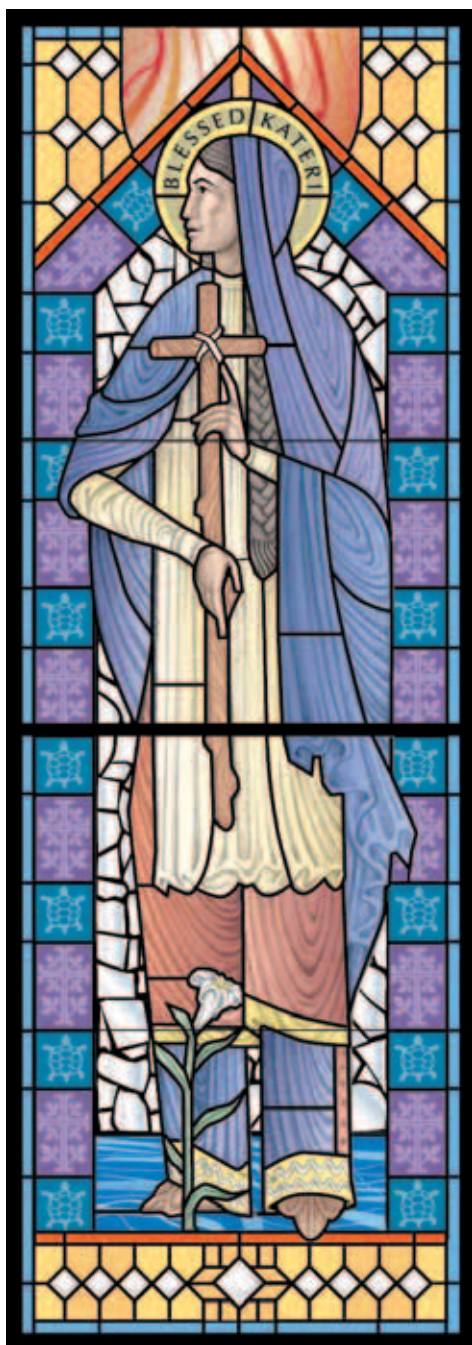
Fr. Chad Gion

Pastor

# Dedicating Her Life to Jesus

## *Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha*

*“Be strong in our beautiful Faith... Love Jesus... Love Mary.” -Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha*



June 22, 1980, was an extraordinary day for Catholics in North America. In Rome, Pope John Paul II proclaimed that Kateri Tekakwitha, the “Lily of the Mohawks,” had reached the heights of sanctity and was to be called “Blessed.”

Kateri was born near the town of Auriesville, N.Y., in the year 1656, the daughter of a Mohawk warrior. She was 4 years old when her mother died of smallpox, and was soon after adopted by her two aunts and an uncle. The disease also attacked Kateri and disfigured her face.

Kateri experienced a radical conversion as a teenager. She was baptized at the age of 20 and subsequently suffered tremendous hostility from her tribe. Although she had to suffer greatly for her Faith, she remained firm in her resolve to give all to Christ.

Eventually, Kateri went to a newly formed colony of Christian American Indians in Canada. Here, she lived a life dedicated to prayer, penitential practices, and care for the sick and elderly. Every morning, even during the bitterest winters, she stood before the chapel door until it opened at 4 a.m. and remained there until after the last Mass. She had a particularly fervent devotion to the Holy Eucharist and to Jesus Crucified. In 1679, Kateri took a vow of perpetual virginity in the presence of a priest.

Having received the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, Kateri died on

April 17, 1680, accompanied by a group of priests and American Indians. As she passed into the arms of her beloved Lord, she whispered the words, “Jesus! Mary! I love you.”

To the total astonishment of all of those present, about 15 minutes after she died, Kateri’s face became smooth and beautiful. All of the smallpox scars had miraculously disappeared. As the Daughters of St. Paul write in their account of her death, “The radiant beauty of her soul, which had always been visible to God, was now evident to all in the bright glow which lit up her peaceful face.”

Blessed Kateri, the patroness of the environment and ecology, is the first American Indian to be beatified. Her feast day is celebrated on July 14. Strong devotion to Blessed Kateri has been a primary reason for the establishment of American Indian ministries and churches all over the United States and Canada. Her cause for canonization is currently underway in the Church. Hundreds of thousands have visited shrines to Blessed Kateri erected at her birthplace, as well as various locations around the world.

As we welcome the new stained glass window of Blessed Kateri at Spirit of Life, let us remember to pause before her image from time to time, asking for her most powerful intercession. We are sure to see some amazing results!

# Working to Make It a Way of Life

## *The Stewardship Committee*



**Y**ou've probably heard it said that stewardship "is a way of life." That means that stewardship isn't something that you can just live overnight. It requires study, prayer, discernment, and sustained effort to make it happen. And coordinating those efforts and practicing that discernment are two of the key jobs of our parish Stewardship Committee.

The committee's main role is to assist and advise Fr. Chad and the Parish Council in the area of stewardship within parish life. That means the committee members need to have thought and prayed deeply about what stewardship truly means, and how stewardship can become a vital force in the life of every parishioner at Spirit of Life. To help facilitate that reflection and discussion, the committee is currently meeting to read and discuss the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*.

"Our goal is to continue our discernment, to personally become a reflection of stewardship, and to hopefully integrate stewardship into the life of the parish," says Jim Doll, chairman of the Stewardship Committee.

The Stewardship Committee looks for ways to nurture stewardship among all parishioners. Recently, it helped coordinate April's Stewardship Fair.

Though "stewardship" might sound like a simple plea for more money, true stewardship, Jim says, is about something

deeper than giving money: it's about using well the gifts you've been given from God, whether monetary or otherwise.

"My involvement in the committee has helped me understand that stewardship is all-encompassing," he says. "It is a way of life, a realization that all I have is a gift and blessing from God, and the return of my time, talent and treasure is my personal responsibility."

The Stewardship Committee is currently seeking to extend its support of existing and future ministries at Spirit of Life. Like any organization, the Stewardship Committee requires new ideas and new blood to thrive, and fresh, creative people are always welcome to bring ideas and suggestions to the group.

The Stewardship Committee meets every month (check the events calendar for exact dates and times), and the meetings are open to anyone who wants to learn more about the committee. Stewardship Committee members are appointed by Fr. Chad, and they are open to suggestions and conversation with any parishioner about the stewardship way of life at our parish. Please feel free to talk to any of the committee members in person, or you can reach the committee via e-mail at [stewardship@myspiritoflife.com](mailto:stewardship@myspiritoflife.com).

### **The Spirit of Life Stewardship Committee**

Jim & Cindy Doll

David & Tina Durgan

Kevin & Diane Leingang

Pat Lengenfelder

Marlene Magilke

David & Bonnie Volk

Fr. Chad Gion

# The Precepts of the Church

**M**any contemporary Catholics are amazed to learn that the Church has a rule that they must receive Holy Communion at least once a year. Most American Catholics troop down the aisle to receive the sacrament every time they attend Mass, with the idea of not receiving never entering their minds.

This is a dramatic contrast to the prevalent practice for much of the Church's history, and one common even until the mid-twentieth century. Then, you'd find many Sunday Masses packed with worshippers, but when it was time for Communion, only the priest who was celebrant would receive, plus maybe a handful of religious or a few especially devout members of the laity.



New attitudes and the Church's revised disciplinary rules are responsible for the difference. A century ago, most Catholics would not receive Communion unless they had been to confession earlier that day or the day before. They were very aware of the danger of being in a state of mortal sin and didn't want to take any chances. We had been very effective in inculcating the well-known attitude of "Catholic guilt."

In addition, the Church's law required that anyone receiving Holy Communion had to be fasting, which meant no food or drink, not even water, could be received from midnight on until after Communion. The only recognized exception was the Viaticum for the dying and sometimes the Communion of the sick. That explains

why most of those intending to receive Communion attended early morning celebrations, and many Catholics made their Communion only once a year (their "Easter duty").

Modern views emphasize God's love and forgiveness, and we have relaxed rules for the Eucharistic fast, which is reduced now to one hour before Communion, with water allowed at any time. As a result, almost everyone at Mass comes forward every time except for a few people who have problematic marital situations or children who have not yet made their First Communion.

While few would want to go back to the days of rigid Communion fasts and an approach to God in which a sense of His wrath predominates, it may be healthy for our souls to



## Third Precept:

*You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist  
at least during the Easter season.*



*The fruits of  
the Eucharist  
are rich,  
and provide  
essential  
nourishment  
for our souls.*

remember that it is possible to fall into mortal sin, and if we do, we need to go to confession before we receive Holy Communion. Being in a state of grace is still a requirement to partake of the Eucharistic Banquet. Worshipping without receiving is sometimes a spiritually wholesome practice, and it can make us appreciate the sacrament even more. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1385) teaches, “Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion.”

So why is it required that we receive Holy Communion at least once a year? Because the fruits of the Eucharist are rich, and provide essential nourishment for our souls. Indeed, frequent

Communion is strongly encouraged for those who are spiritually prepared.

And what are these fruits we receive when we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ? “Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant’s union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins. Since receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ, it also reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ” (*Catechism*, 1416).

Communion, then, at least once a year, is necessary to maintain the life of the soul. The Church provides for at least this minimal nourishment with the precept that we all receive Holy Communion at Easter.



## Eucharistic Liturgies

**Monday**, 9:00 a.m. Communion Service

**Tuesday-Friday**, 7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m.

**Saturday**, 9:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

**Sunday**, 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m. (Life Teen)

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## Joseph Evinger *continued from front cover*

heart toward the priesthood. I desire to be a priest more and more every day, and to be the Lord's instrument in bringing Jesus to the world. I want to help others form a friendship with Christ so that they can come to Him with all of their struggles. I would like to be part of their lives, nourishing their hope in God."

For six weeks in May and June, we will have the blessing of having Joseph among us as he fulfills an internship for priestly formation. He will be helping with various ministries in our parish community, and witnessing the experience of parish life.

"I hope to get to know the people of Spirit of Life, and gain a greater experience of what it means to be a parish priest," Joseph says. "I am also really looking forward to working with Fr. Chad and Fr. Josh, as well as experiencing the various sacraments from the standpoint of a priest."

Joseph's joy over the prospect of being a priest is contagious. When asked what he would say to someone who is discerning his or her life's vocation, he says, "I would encourage them to always stay very close to the Lord, making time for honest, one-on-one prayer with Him."

Welcome, Joseph, to Spirit of Life! You have our heartfelt prayers.

*"I love being a seminarian. I have found my peace in life, and who I am meant to be. The Lord continues to stir my heart toward the priesthood."*

*- Joseph Evinger, seminarian*