

Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

FR. CHRIS KADRMAS REFLECTS ON THE PRIESTHOOD, STEWARDSHIP, AND TRUSTING IN GOD'S PLANS

If you ask our Associate Pastor, Fr. Chris Kadrmas, if he has a favorite Biblical passage, he will answer without hesitation, "Psalm 131." He refers to this Scripture as "a beautiful psalm of trust," and indeed, Fr. Kadrmas' own call to the priesthood would not have come to fruition if not for the great trust that he placed in the Lord.

Fr. Kadrmas grew up in a Catholic home in Bowman, N.D. The oldest of three boys raised by two teachers, Father has always had a deep love of learning. In high school, he experienced the first pull toward a potential vocation as he began pondering the meaning of life. He attended college at the University of North Dakota, where he was a member of the campus Newman Center. When the center's Pastor, Fr. James Ermer, challenged students to consider religious life and the priesthood, Fr. Kadrmas again felt he might have a call. However, he was still not convinced, and even continued to hope that he might meet his future wife at the Newman Center.

"I ended up dating a beautiful gal and we became engaged," he says. "I thought, 'If I put a ring on someone's finger, God will be quiet.' Instead, He began knocking louder and louder. I ended up calling off the engagement, which was very painful and difficult. Afterward, the priests that I knew, including Fr. Ermer, told me not to rush off to seminary, but to finish my degree



Fr. Chris Kadrmas

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Good FOR THE GIVER



A simple riddle: If you don't give it away, you can't keep it. But if you give it away, it will increase.

The best answer to this riddle, if you haven't already guessed, is *love*. But the beauty of this paradox is that there can be a number of different answers. Another response might be *artistic talent*. Ask any artist, and they'll tell you that their skill for drawing or painting diminishes after a few weeks or months of inactivity. But the more they paint, the more their talent grows.

We also see this truth illustrated in nature. The Sea of Galilee, teeming with fish and other wildlife, is one example. All of the water in this beautiful reservoir is constantly being drained through the Jordan River, which stretches for about 60 miles, providing the only fresh water for all of Israel. It finally drains into the

Dead Sea, which has no outlet. It is consequently stagnant and totally lifeless, continually evaporating into thin air.

The point, in a nutshell, is that the good steward takes care of his or her gifts by giving them away. As a result, you won't have less left over, but will instead have more!

There is a story about St. Teresa of Calcutta and her visit to one of the hundreds of convents she had founded. The Superior of the convent told her, "Mother, we don't have enough time to do our work with the poor; there's just not enough hours in the day." St. Teresa responded, "Then you need to pray more." When the convent added another full hour of prayer each day, they somehow found that they had enough time to do even *more* for the poor in that city.

The difficulty with this idea

– that by giving we receive – is that it is still a struggle to give. When we arrive at the moment of giving, it appears on the surface that we will have less left over. This is especially true regarding money. When writing a check to a charity or to the parish, you mathematically end up with less money to spend on other things. And yet, the immaterial value of our sacrifice is immeasurable. This is why Jesus speaks so frequently in the Gospels about the spiritual benefits of giving to others. We *do* have more after we give, but it is simply more of something else – and something better.

When we emphasize stewardship, it is not primarily to increase "volunteerism" or to swell our budget. Indeed, our first aim is always the "good of the giver." It is not because the parish has needs, *but because we have a need to give*. We recognize that the model Steward is Jesus, who gave *all*, even His very life, so that we may have everything.

Stewardship in Nature

The Sea of Galilee stays fresh and healthy because it "gives away" all its water through the Jordan River. When all that water is finally drained into the Dead Sea, it stays there, becoming stagnant and lifeless. Human beings are the same way. Giving of ourselves is one of the main ways we stay spiritually healthy.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

WHERE ARE OUR PRIORITIES?

Dear Parishioners,

I am in hopes that you are aware that we are completing and will continue to celebrate the holiest time of the year in our Church. Easter Sunday, April 1, is the high point of the year for us as Catholics. We will, of course, continue to celebrate this holy time until Pentecost Sunday, which is May 20 this year. That is correct — our Easter season continues until then.

St. Paul provided some sage advice. He said, “think of what is above, not of what is on earth” (Colossians 3:2). Regardless of your opinions on what happens after resurrection, we can agree that it will be something “above” this life. Paul might be asking us if we put God first in all things. Life can become very encumbered with possessions, money, power, and even our egos.

Our goal should be to put God at the top of our lists. If that is not what we do, we may need to adjust our priorities. If we have not moved in that direction during Lent or in the past, now is the time to do it. We must constantly strive to not allow earthly things to become our gods.

It was St. Gregory the Great who said, “God made us to be the gardeners of paradise.” Some stewardship people have maintained that God has given each of us a garden — and when we are judged, we only hear one question, “What have you done with the garden I gave you?”



What have we done? What are we doing? First, we must recognize and acknowledge that we are all gifted, admittedly in different and varied ways. Despite what we see as our gifts or how we measure them, we need to ensure that we are using them in ways that serve God and others — ways that show good discipleship and stewardship on our parts.

Were you aware that the month of April is dedicated to the Holy Spirit in the Church? The term “spirit” translates from the Hebrew word *ruah*, which means “breath.” Truly, as Catholics, the Holy Spirit has been breathed into each of us, and is part of the garden we have received. Do we turn to Him? Do we rely on Him for strength? Do we even grant that He is part of our very being? We should. We need to, as St. Paul advised, “think of what is above, not of what is on earth.”

May God bless you in all you do, and strive to do!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Msgr. Chad Gion".

Msgr. Chad Gion,
Pastor

FR. CHRIS KADRMAS REFLECTS ON THE PRIESTHOOD, STEWARDSHIP

“I think the brotherhood of the priesthood is really, really strong, especially in our diocese. When you’re a lay person, your household is your big focus and connection, but as a priest, you have a deep bond and connection to your fellow priests fraternally. And I’ve been surprised by how small the church is, in the sense that you really become connected globally very quickly.”

— Fr. Chris Kadrmas

and work for a while and see if the call would deepen.”

Following his mentors’ advice, Fr. Kadrmas completed a degree in occupational therapy in 2002 and spent two years working on the inpatient psychiatric unit at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Minot. While he enjoyed his work there, Fr. Kadrmas continued to feel called to the priesthood. In 2004, he applied to seminary through the Diocese of Bismarck and was sent to the Pontifical College of Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio.

Fr. Kadrmas was not alone

in taking a leap of faith to attend seminary, and he was thankful for the friendship and support of his fellow seminarians.

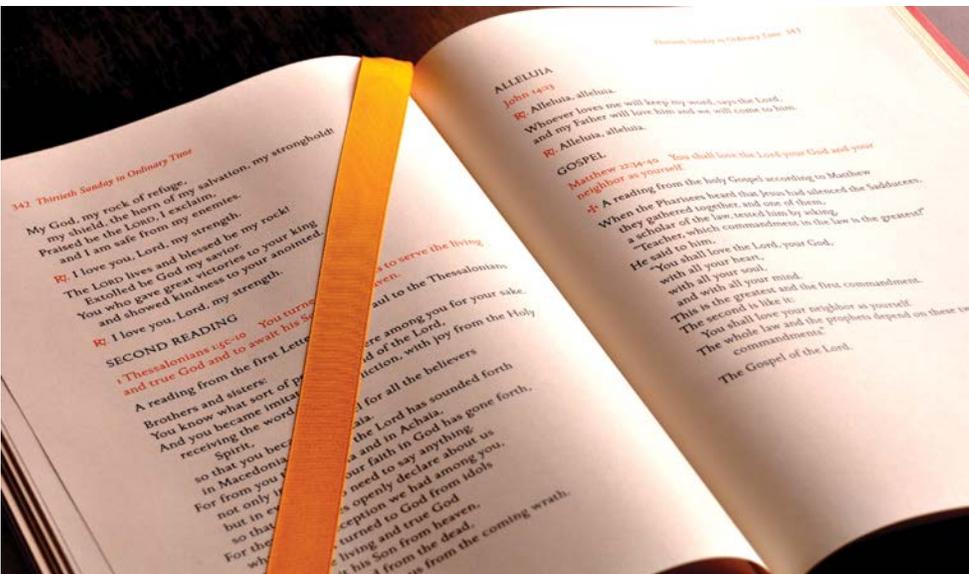
“I went [to seminary] with two other guys from the diocese who were also both leaving professions,” he explains. “All three of us ended up lasting there through the six years, and all along the way, the call just kind of grows on you. You feel, ‘Okay, I can do this, I can live the life of the celibacy and serving the people.’”

Fr. Kadrmas was ordained

in May 2000 and, to this day, he still feels blessed by the deep sense of connection and fellowship he has experienced in his vocation.

“I think the brotherhood of the priesthood is really, really strong, especially in our diocese,” he says. “When you’re a lay person, your household is your big focus and connection, but as a priest, you have a deep bond and connection to your fellow priests fraternally. And I’ve been surprised by how small the church is, in the sense that you really become connected globally very quickly. I’ve met cardinals, and I know a priest who knew Mother Teresa. There are a lot of doors that are opened for you, and a trust that is extended.”

After two years serving in the diocese, Fr. Kadrmas was sent to study canon law at St. Paul University in Ottawa, Canada. Following the completion of those studies 10 years ago, he has served simultaneously as a parish priest and the Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Bismarck, exercising the judicial power of the bishop in



ARDSHIP, AND TRUSTING IN GOD'S PLANS *continued from front cover*

Psalm 131 (from The Grail Psalter Translation, 1963 — present in current American breviaries):

*O Lord, my heart is not proud
nor haughty my eyes.
I have not gone after things too great
nor marvels beyond me.*

*Truly I have set my soul
in silence and peace.
As a child has rest in its mother's arms,
even so my soul.*

*O Israel, hope in the Lord
both now and forever.*



the church's court of law.

As the son of two teachers, one of Fr. Kadrmas' favorite aspects of serving in the priesthood is preaching.

"I try to work a lot of history and science into the Biblical and church history when preaching texts," he explains. "Theology is kind of the queen of all sciences, pulling it all together with God, the Truth and source. I feel called to help people on that journey and the biggest delight is seeing people make those connections.

"I also love seeing the faith development in children," Fr.

Kadrmas continues. "I enjoy helping children understand that it's okay to have questions about God — that you need to be respectful and in awe of Him, but not afraid. And to encourage a wonder for God and His creation in all its forms."

Over the years, Fr. Kadrmas, has also enjoyed being able to help make stewardship a part of life for parishioners.

"It's a great paradigm for evaluating how I use my time, talent and treasure for God, the parish and the common good," he says. "It really puts stewardship in practical terms.

I need to reflect my Christianity in my schedule and in my pocketbook, and if I don't have it there, I need to reevaluate."

Here at Spirit of Life, we are thankful that Fr. Kadrmas trusted in the Lord's plans for him over 20 years ago when he first followed the call to become a priest for the Diocese of Bismarck. Throughout his vocation, Father has in turn been blessed by the support of many mentors, fellow priests and parishioners. What an inspiring example of the abundant blessings in store for all of God's children who choose to place their trust in Him!

CONTRIBUTING TO THE BETTERMENT OF SPIRIT OF LIFE: THE BUILDING AND GROUNDS HELPERS

Our Knights of Columbus Council No. 14816 provides incredible amounts of service to our parish and to our community. However, one of the particular parish tasks the council took on a few years ago was to serve as the core of the ministry known as Building and Grounds Helpers.

“We recognize that our mission, our faith in God, compels us as Knights to action,” says Dave Trnka, who has served as a key leader in the Knights, and also serves to lead in the Building and Grounds Helpers. “There is no better way to experience love and compassion than by helping those in need, a call we answer every day. Included in our commitment is our parish. We do what we need to do whenever we are needed and whenever we are asked. Our ministry is really part of our Knights of Columbus Council No. 14816’s effort to be an important part and contributor to the betterment of Spirit of Life Catholic Church.”

The main function of these volunteers is to perform needed maintenance and other physical tasks around the parish’s physical plant and grounds. Tasks that members carry out are cleaning, carpentry, painting, electrical work, plumbing,

outdoor yard work, including raking and other landscaping tasks. No special skills are needed to help in this area.

“We are always particularly attentive to the needs at the church and on the grounds at Easter and Christmas because there are people who attend Masses then who may not be here other times,” Dave says. “We hold cleaning days that are well publicized and certainly open to anyone who is willing to give of himself or herself for a short period of time. This all has to do with hospitality, I think.”

Hospitality is, of course one of the Four Pillars of Stewardship, which we embrace as a parish and a stewardship community. And one of the other Four Pillars, Service, calls each of us to be servant ministers to the needs of our parish, our parish members, the wider community, and the Universal Church.

It is at the parish level that people live out and perform acts of stewardship most often. A community like Spirit of Life could not have subsisted and adjusted to the growth it has experienced without the selfless gifts offered by its members, stewardship offerings of time, talent, and certainly treasure.

If you are interested in learning more about this ministry, please contact Cheryl Hansen at 701-663-1660 or cheryl@myspiritoflife.com.





HOSPITALITY AND USHERS MINISTRY

Creating a Welcome for All

“The Hospitality Ministry is all about getting just as much out of it as you’re giving. It’s an opportunity to meet people as they’re coming in the door and you get to know people better that way.”

— Nick Renner

Nick Renner isn’t your typical parishioner.

“I’m a biker,” he says. “I walk in with my ponytail and my Harley stuff on.”

Nick is one of the faces that many people see when they first walk into Spirit of Life, and it’s entirely by design. He and his family are an integral part of the Hospitality and Usher Ministry and when they were first asked to greet parishioners on a weekly basis, Nick says his appearance was part of the idea.

“We wanted the person who felt like they didn’t belong to see a biker standing there welcoming them into church,” Nick says. “It made a lot more people at ease. I think of it as using our lifestyle as a benefit to show people that yes, you are welcome.”

A spirit of welcome is what the

Hospitality and Usher Ministry is meant to embody. Often among the first faces you see when you arrive for Mass, these individuals are responsible for providing a warm welcome that endures long after visitors have left. By quietly guiding parishioners to their seats, answering questions, and being the eyes and ears of clergy during Mass, the ministry also helps make the social side of Mass more enjoyable.

“The Hospitality Ministry is all about getting just as much out of it as you’re giving,” Nick says. “It’s an opportunity to meet people as they’re coming in the door and you get to know people better that way.”

As the Hospitality Ministry has grown over the years to include some ushering duties, Nick says members of the ministry also help

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Change Service Requested

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Spirit of Life

Monday: 8 a.m.

Tuesday - Thursday: 7 a.m., 9 a.m.

Friday: 7 a.m., 9 a.m.,

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

Sunday: 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m.

CONFESSIONS: Sunday: 8-8:30 a.m.

Saturday: 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Wednesday: 7-8:30 p.m., and 20 min. before
weekday Masses except Mondays

St. Martin's Parish

Even Months: 9 a.m.

Odd Months: 11 a.m.

St. Anthony's Parish

Even Months: 11 a.m.

Odd Months: 9 a.m.

HOSPITALITY AND USHERS MINISTRY *continued from page 7*

open doors, assist with collection, and choose families to help bring up the gifts.

For the Renners, being the welcoming faces everyone knows has been a family affair. Nick is joined in the ministry by his wife, Sheila, and their children — son, Nick, Jr., and daughters, Isabelle and Ashley Haaland. Their involvement has inspired their kids not only to reach out in fellowship to other parishioners, but also to lend a helping hand to other ministries.

“Isabelle likes helping hand out bulletins after Mass and my boy has gotten to the point where he likes helping out in the church, too,” Nick says of Nick, Jr., who now serves as a Eucharistic Minister. “He took that step and it all started out as us wanting to get our kids involved with the church.”



Rick and Shelia Renner, and their children Isabelle and Nick Jr., have been providing a warm welcome for parishioners and guests alike for many years as part of the Hospitality/Ushers Ministry.

For families or individuals who may be interested in lending their energy and time to furthering a spirit of welcome, please contact the parish office at 701-663-1660. “We are always interested in more help — the more families, I think, the better,” Nick Renner says. “Hey, if this biker couple can do it, you can do it too!”