

Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Turn on the news, or scroll through a social media feed, and it's plain to see – there is a major need for prayer.

“There are so many people out there who need prayer; there's so much hurt in the world,” says Gladys Thomas. “When someone is in need of prayer, I'm drawn to that.”

Gladys has served on the parish Prayer Line Ministry for many years and has always felt the importance of interceding for the needs of others.

The Prayer Line Ministry is a group of about 12 people who commit to praying for the needs of people within the parish. Each week, they receive an email with prayer requests for which they intercede, whether praying a Rosary, spending prayerful time in adoration, or through another prayer.

“I've always liked praying for people because I know prayer is powerful,” Gladys says. “People need to know that God is alive in this world and He listens.”

In the past year, Gladys experienced the power of prayer in a very personal way. Her husband, Gene, was diagnosed with cancer, and passed away earlier this fall.

Gene had fallen away from his faith, and Gladys struggled with worry as his condition continually worsened. Despite Gladys having priests come to pray with him and offer confession, Gene always refused.

However, Gladys and others in the Prayer Line



Gladys Thomas has served with the Prayer Line Ministry for many years.

Ministry did not give up praying for him. One night, she had an experience in prayer that brought her immense peace and consolation in regards to God's care for her husband. And it wasn't long before Gene decided to go to confession.

“He was ready, and I think it was a week later when he passed away,” Gladys says. “I know now, God's taking care of him.”

“My husband was prayed for by [the Prayer Line] for many months and I believe that through all those prayers, God did amazing things for him,” she adds, crediting not only Gene's change of heart, but also his lack of pain despite his suffering to the

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BEING A GOOD CHRISTMAS STEWARD

The Christmas season is fast approaching. We have already made our gift lists, and perhaps even checked them twice. First on the list is family, followed by friends, our children's teachers and coaches, and maybe even the mailman. Christmas inspires us to give our family and friends gifts of love and appreciation, in gratitude towards all they do for us during the year. The very idea of holiday gift giving – a display of love and gratefulness to those who have touched our lives – is parallel to the concept of stewardship. When we give to God, we are effectively saying “thanks” for all He has done for us.

Think of all God has done for you this year. How have His loving arms embraced you? Maybe He has answered a special prayer intention. Maybe He has created a job opportunity for an unemployed loved one. He may have helped safely bring a new baby into the family, or instilled peace during a particularly difficult time. God's blessings are countless, and the abundant gifts He bestows upon us are given freely out of incomprehensible love – despite our unworthiness.

Think of the ways you respond to God's bountiful blessings. How do you choose to show Him your thankfulness? As we prepare for the coming of

Christ during Advent, will we remember to add Jesus' name to our list? Uncle John wants a new drill, and Grandpa definitely needs a new cardigan – but what does Jesus want? It is His birthday we are celebrating, after all.

The very first name on the list – above our spouse, children, relatives, and friends – should be God's name. As disciples of Christ, we are called to give God our “first fruits,” not our leftovers. We should joyfully place God first on our gift-giving lists, not out of guilt or as an afterthought, but out of love and appreciation.

Stewardship allows us to tangibly give a Christmas gift to God through our time, talent and treasure. We give God gifts of time through prayer, such as spending time before the Blessed

Sacrament or praying the Rosary. We can give our talents to God by way of simple charitable actions, such as bringing a meal to a hard-pressed neighbor, or watching a young mother's children so that she is able to prepare for her own family's Christmas celebration. And as for treasure, we can give God a portion of our income this Christmas by dropping an extra dollar in the collection basket. Whatever choices you make this season, make the decision to be a good Christmas steward.

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A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

ADVENT: MOVING TOWARD A TIME OF FULFILLED HOPE

Dear Parishioners,

There is never a time during the year when we cannot pause and reflect on who and what we are and how we conduct our lives, both as a parish and as people of God. But this time of year in particular lends itself to just that.

Advent is often called “a season of hope.” However, it is more than that. We have choices and decisions to make at this time. This is the time when we must acknowledge the need for us to change attitudes and to welcome the light of Christ’s presence. In this way, we can contribute to bringing hope to a world that is starved for hope.

Of course, we approach this time of year with a spirit of confident expectation, but now is the time for us to be awake to Christ, Whose presence is revealed as forgiveness, Whose peace reconciles our differences, and Whose hope should strengthen and lift up our hearts.

We have pointed out that each and every day is an opportunity for a new beginning. Our new Church liturgical year began on the First Sunday of Advent. We understand that Advent is a time of preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord – Christmas – but I would remind you that it is much more than that for us Catholics and Christians.

It is a time for us to prepare for Christ’s Second Coming, as well. Much of what we do, our Scripture readings, our prayers, our traditions are built on that reality. One of the traditions in our Church and in many of our homes is an Advent wreath. That custom is filled with meaning. The wreath tends to be circular in shape with four candles – three purple and one rose. The color purple is very evident at this time of year, just as it is during Lent. Purple represents prayer, penance, sacrifice, and good works.

On the Third Sunday of Advent, though,



we light the rose candle. That is Gaudete Sunday, a day of rejoicing. Throughout Advent, the candles are lit in progression each week. This builds on the idea of expectation and hope that we may see as Christ’s first coming into the world, but we must also keep in mind that, at the same time, we are anticipating His Second Coming. We cannot ask ourselves often enough, “Are we ready?” Jesus and St. Paul and others remind us often that we do not and cannot know the time and

the place.

The point is that the time is now for us. Yes, this is a time of hope, but we are heading toward a time of fulfilled hope. God bless you and yours at this special time of year.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Msgr. Chad Gion". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Msgr. Chad Gion,
Pastor



SPREADING THE W

When a person is sick or lonely, few things feel more comforting than a warm blanket. And when it's a blanket that has been carefully made by loving hands and heartfelt prayers, that warmth only grows, becoming a tangible reminder of God's love for that person. Parishioner Trish Rennich experienced this firsthand when her own mother was battling cancer.

"When my mom was sick, someone gave her a blanket with some verses and things on it," Trish says. "She would take that blanket to chemotherapy with her. It just got me thinking about how a blanket could be very healing to someone who is suffering."

Witnessing the effect of that blanket on her mother left a deep impression on Trish. This later led her to join Spirit of Life's own Prayer Blanket Ministry, a ministry devoted to alleviating parishioners' and community members' suffering by wrapping them physically and spiritually in God's loving embrace.

"When we give that prayer blanket to a person, we are conveying to them that we have prayed for them the entire time that we were making that blanket," says parishioner and ministry member Linda Schwartzbauer. "We pray for either their physical healing or that God will give them the strength to bear any suffering in their life."

A subgroup of the Parish Outreach program, the Prayer Blanket Ministry makes and distributes blankets to people who are hurting in some way.



Prayer Blanket Ministry member Linda Schwartzbauer delivers a handmade blanket to parishioner Rosemary Ciavarella.

This can vary, explains Outreach coordinator Mari Jo Sigl, from individuals who are sick, homebound, or simply going through a difficult period in life.

"It's just a spiritually rewarding feeling to know that you are meeting a need for them," Mari Jo says. "It helps share with them a special ministry of caring. Most times, they are just so grateful and it is a reminder for them to lift up their own prayers for others."

"It helps me become a reflection of God's mercy to others," Trish adds. "Especially when we are in pain, we tend to forget about God's mercy. We all need

reminders of God's love and mercy – it helps us remember that He is always with us."

Beyond caring for those in need, the Prayer Blanket Ministry provides a unique opportunity for parishioners to use their God-given talents for others. This was one of the things that attracted Linda to the ministry, who joined shortly after retiring from her own sewing business.

"When I retired after being in business for 33 years, this opportunity came up and I just jumped on it," Linda says. "I'm always looking for ways to fulfill my stewardship and it just seemed like such an easy thing for me to do because it's something I've just always done. It also is such a rewarding thing."

Another benefit of the ministry is that members are able to participate in it completely on their own time and in their own unique way. Volunteers simply

WARMTH OF CHRIST

create a blanket of their own design, following basic requirements such as using a soft material and making it a specific size. Whether a fleece blanket with tassels, a delicately designed receiving blanket for a newborn, or a traditional cloth blanket, each completed prayer blanket can be identified by its patch containing the words, “Be not afraid, for I am with you always.” Once blankets are completed, volunteers simply drop them off at the office, where they are blessed by Msgr. Chad Gion and then distributed to those in need within the community.

Not only are parishioners able to live out Christ’s calling to tend the sick and those in need through this ministry, but they are also able to spend quality time with our Lord in the process. And for those who may not be blessed with the gift of sewing, helping the ministry by donating fabric is another great way to contribute.

“It really strengthens my prayer life,” Linda says. “I probably wouldn’t normally sit there and pray for two to three hours. I would probably just be saying a quick prayer on the run. So, this kind of forces me to set aside time for quiet prayer, certainly strengthening my own prayer life in the process.”



Though blankets vary in styles and color, each one is characterized by its patch reminding recipients that God is always with them.

New members are always welcome, as there are never too many prayer blankets. To learn more about this ministry, please contact Mari Jo Sigl at 701-663-1660 or ministry team leader Trish Rennich at 701-222-0663.

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“WE ALL NEED A PLACE TO CALL HOME”

HARVEY WOLFF AND TERRY MACK TEAM UP TO HELP FAMILIES IN NEED

As Catholics, we are called to recognize the dignity of every human life, and there are few ways of respecting that dignity more powerful than ensuring that each man, woman and child have a comfortable and safe place to rest. Spirit of Life parishioner Harvey Wolff and his friend, Terry Mack – a parishioner of St. Anne Church in Bismarck – are dedicated to helping those in need create loving homes for their families by picking up and delivering donated furniture. This special ministry is an extension of the Outreach Food Pantry, coordinated by Jackie Binstock.

“It’s gratifying and rewarding to help the needy, and there are so many in this community,” Harvey says. “People would be surprised how many people are in need in this community, people who have nothing. They use every penny they have to get an apartment and have nothing left to furnish it. So that’s what we do – help them furnish their apartment. Mostly, we deliver donated beds. A lot of times we’ll go to a place and they’re sleeping on the floor or an air mattress, and sometimes that is all they have. When you deliver the furniture, you see the smiles and how grateful they are.”

Once Harvey started helping with furniture deliveries, he asked his fishing buddy, Terry, to team up with him and lend a hand. Both retired, the two men now spend several days a week picking up and delivering donated beds, tables, and chairs. If they aren’t out fishing, there is a good chance that they are driving a covered trailer – a recent donation from Harvey’s brother-in-law – around the area, bringing furniture to those in need.

“It’s been a real eye-opener for me,” Terry says

of the experience. “You think you live in a middle class town and everyone has a bed to sleep in – then you deliver beds and see that people have been sleeping on the floor. What we’re doing is such a little thing – it’s a creature comfort – and there may be greater needs you can’t help with, but you do what you can.

“It’s good that the church can do this,” he continues. “I don’t know what the poor people would do without it. I’m just amazed that Spirit of Life church does what they do to help people. The Corporal Works of Mercy – feeding the hungry, sheltering those who don’t have shelter –they’re really trying to help. You don’t even have to be Catholic to do these things and to realize that this is so essential.”

The volunteer work Harvey and Terry do at Spirit of Life is not their first experience helping families make necessary improvements to their homes. Two years ago, the friends went on a God’s Child mission trip to Guatemala, where they built houses for two families. At the time, the families had been living in structures consisting of a tin roof and dirt floor, which were nearly impossible to keep clean. The concrete floors in the homes that Harvey and Terry constructed will stay dry and can be swept, preventing illness in the family members, as well as increasing their comfort level.

According to Terry, he and Harvey, along with the other two members of their building team, surprised everyone by completing their project ahead of schedule.

“We had a team of four,” he explains. “Harvey and I are both 70, the carpenter was about 66, and

“In some way, it’s just a great pleasure to give back. We have so much compared to a lot of people who have little or nothing, and it’s just great to give back what the good Lord has given us. We all need a place to call home, to lay our head and hang our hat.” – Harvey Wolff

“WE ALL NEED A PLACE TO CALL HOME” *continued from page 6*



Harvey Wolff and Terry Mack team up to make sure donated furniture makes it to the homes of families in need.

the other man about 68. So when they saw us, they said there was no way we would build the houses in a week. Well, the first house only took us three days, and then we had an extra day for fishing!”

Both Harvey and Terry agree that their experience building homes in Guatemala increased their desire to help families locally.

“Everybody needs an excuse for living, and I’m trying to help a few people,” Terry says. “I don’t know what other retired guys do – maybe they go to the Y, but I don’t think I need to do that. I’ll haul furniture instead.”

The friends feel blessed to be able to spend their retirement fishing and helping the needy together, and plan to do so as long as they can.

“In some way, it’s just a great pleasure to give back,” Harvey says. “We have so much compared to a lot of people who have little or nothing, and it’s just great to give back what the good Lord has given us. We all need a place to call home, to lay our head and hang our hat.”

Are you interested in helping with the donated furniture outreach? This ministry is always accepting donations of essential pieces of furniture – beds, tables, chairs, etc. – with a special need for bed frames, in addition to mattresses. Also, Harvey and Terry would personally like to encourage any younger men interested in helping out to join the team! Please email Jackie Binstock for more information at jackie@myspiritoflife.com.

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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., Latin Mass at 5:30 p.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.

THE POWER OF PRAYER *continued from front cover*

prayers of many faithful people.

Although incredibly difficult and painful, God showed Gladys His faithfulness during a time of great suffering.

"I know God loves us all and He does listen to our prayers," Gladys says. "We just have to be persistent, and they get answered, not in our way all the time, but God showed me that He's in control and not to worry."

Praying for others and being part of the Prayer Line Ministry has also helped Gladys grow closer to the Lord.

"I've grown in my faithfulness, just seeing and knowing that God is faithful and He answers your prayers," she says. "It gives you more peace when you pray."

Gladys hopes that parishioners will not only get involved praying for others, but also by sharing their prayer requests with the Prayer Line Ministry.

"If you want to do something behind the scenes, this is a good way to do it," she says. "I think more people should ask for prayer, don't be afraid to ask for prayer. There are people out there who really want to pray for others. God says, where there are two or three together to pray, He is with them. There is more power with more people.

"It's a beautiful thing to do," Gladys continues. "I encourage anybody – I think it will change their life. God changes you in a very amazing ways. God blesses you in many ways you wouldn't believe."

If you would like more information on getting involved with the Prayer Line Ministry, or if you have a prayer request, please contact the parish office at 701-663-1660, and ask for Sandy or Deb.