

# Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

## SHARING THE BEAUTIFUL GIFT OF MUSIC THROUGH THE CANTORS MINISTRY

The gift of music has been a wellspring of grace and inspiration for Jess Friesz over the years, something that has helped him connect with God in a powerful way.

“Music has always been a source of peace for me personally — a real spiritual aspect of my life,” he says. “It gives me a unique way to experience God’s presence. It is such a blessing!”

The appreciation for music was born in his heart early on in life.

“Music has always been important to my family,” he says. “A love for music was instilled in us from our mother. I come from a family of 10. As little kids, we sang for competitions, and sometimes for church. We have been singing together for so many years. It has really built up our faith in God, and helped us to

bond with one another. It has also been a great form of entertainment for our family. It is common for us to sit around a campfire and sing together.”

Over time, Jess has discovered that the best gifts in life become even better when they are generously given away.

“I have been a cantor for 25 years now,” he says. “Being able to give back to the parish community by sharing my musical talents has always been important to me. I have really enjoyed leading the congregation in song and helping them worship. Cantoring is essentially just me giving the gift I have been given back to others. It is important to recognize the gifts you have, and share them with others.”

And by giving one’s talent away, one can also

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# Prayer

We make constant reference to the “three Ts” of stewardship, recognizing that to truly live as a stewardship people, we must give God the first fruits of our time, talent, and treasure. It is easy for us to see the concrete reality of the latter two. If we are to give God our talents, we must first recognize with what talents He has blessed us, and then use those talents for His greater glory. And as we continue our stewardship path, we know very well that our money is something concrete. When we recognize it as a gift from God, we know that we are to give a certain amount back to Him. It is easy for many of us to understand what it means to give God our talent and our treasure.

But what does it mean to give God a portion of our time? This idea is much harder to grasp, and yet giving to God the first fruits of our time is just as important as the other two. And if we understand this idea and implement it properly, our stewardship of time will serve as the very foundation from which our stewardship of talent and treasure bear fruit.

When we talk about stewardship of time, we are referring to prayer time. Prayer is of the utmost importance in a disciple’s life, and in the Diocese of Wichita’s *The Pillars of Parish Stewardship*, it is also one of the four pillars of stewardship.

Does this mean that in order to be true disciples, we should say the *Our Father* three times a day or pray a daily Rosary? Not particularly. Of course, we must not discount the merits of prayer, as the Church in her wondrous wisdom has given us certain prayers to help guide our lives. However, the disciple’s deep life of prayer involves even more.

St. John Chrysostom explains, “You should not think of prayer as being a matter of words. It is a desire for God, an indescribable devotion ... the gift of God’s grace” (*Hom 6*). That is, if we look at prayer as a mere regimen that we must follow every day, then we do not see to the heart of it. The reality is

# COME TO KNOW THE LORD

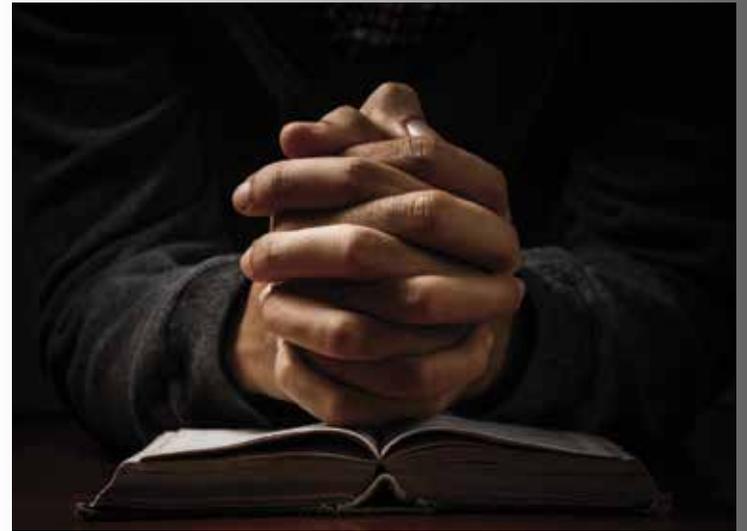
that prayer will take on different forms for every one of us. One person may have a deep devotion to the Rosary, and in praying it, he is closely united to the Lord. Another person might feel deeply connected to Him through constant conversation – in the car on the way to work, before bed at night, or at other hours throughout the day. Meanwhile, for another person, a daily or weekly hour of silence before the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration is the best place for him to offer the Lord his heart. No matter how we choose to pray, we must get to the root of it all. If we are to truly give God our time, it must be a gift of ourselves. It must come from the heart and not take the form of mere word repetition. If we offer an *Our Father* without meditating on the words, it can simply become recitation.

The point of prayer is to get to know the Lord. If we are committed to living as His disciples, we must be on personal terms with Him. The first disciples didn't know what it meant to pray the Rosary. And until the Lord taught them the *Our Father*, they couldn't pray that either. But they were definitely true stewards of their time. They walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus, and ate meals with Him. He was their best friend, and the more they got to know Him, the more they longed to serve Him.

The same holds true for us today. We can walk with Him, talk with Him and sit with Him, just as they did. And He wants us to do this, too. St. John Chrysostom proclaims, there is nothing more

worthwhile: “For prayer unites us to God as His companions” (*Hom 6*). How can we serve Him if we don't know Him? If we truly desire to be a servant people, we must talk to Him whom we wish to serve. We must get to know Him. Then, most assuredly, we will fall in love with Him. We will undoubtedly desire nothing more than to serve Him.

Recognize Jesus as your best friend and spend time with Him as such. He is the Lord, the Creator of the Universe, without whom we would cease to exist. Bring Him your cares and concerns, your excitement, your worry, your fears and your frustrations, and allow Him to comfort you. He is there, and He wants to speak with you.



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# CALL HOME

The phone had rung repeatedly all morning. Each time, there was a different child's voice on the line with a small request, "Mom, could you bring my trumpet to school? It's in the hallway." The next call was similar but a tinier soul on the other end this time, "Mommy, I forgot my lunch. You would be the best mom ever, if you could bring it by lunchtime."

She was 5 — how could I say "no"? After I dropped off both items on two separate trips, I barely got in the door when the phone was ringing again. This time it was the school secretary, Candy Joy — no, I'm not making the name up.

"Matty isn't here this morning. Is he still at home?" she asked.

I raced downstairs only to find a teenager who had overslept and hadn't skipped out the door yet.

Yes, I know all about the "three strikes, you're out" rule. Heck, I invented it. It goes like this — call mom more than three times to have her bring something to school, and you're out! That's final. The problem was I couldn't keep track of how many strikes my six children had on any given day. In all reality, I didn't even know who was on first anymore. And I wasn't sure I even liked baseball — especially after I made up the stupid rule that continued to be broken weekly by everyone, even yours truly. I had been traveling in a minivan stocked with backpacks, kids and old coffee cups for what seemed like an eternity. I couldn't even locate home base if I tried.

"Lord, help me," became both a cry for help and a prayer, which in my book, is a good place to start.

As some of these kids have grown and left the nest, I have found out the hard way, the only thing worse than your kids calling you for every forgotten item is your kid not calling you at all. Yes, sadly this has happened to many moms I know, even me.

Trying to get ahold of these kids is worse than trying to locate last week's coupon for tuna in the recycling bin. How is it that we live in a generation where almost everyone has a cell phone, but it remains next to impossible to communicate with loved ones who would rather remain silent? It's a new form of torture, I swear, guaranteed to bring any mom, on any given day, to her knees.

I would wait patiently and not so patiently for the phone to ring. I am embarrassed to admit it now, but yes, I would even carry my cell into the bathroom so as not to miss the important call, from a child who was holding her momma hostage by a couple broken heartstrings.

Finally, I gave up. I went on a silent retreat for four days, which didn't allow cell phones or talking — and yes, for those of you who know me, I did remain silent. God still works miracles! The best part was locking my cell phone in the car the moment I walked into the retreat. I could have gone out and unlocked my captive cell phone, but I decided even a rule breaker as myself could follow this one rule. It was so good for my soul. After freeing myself from not looking down at my cell phone every three minutes, I actually had time to spare, *lots* of time to spare — 22 hours of free time, to be exact.

I made good use of this time, too. Instead of looking down, I decided to look up. Surely, God might

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## BY SHELLY PRESZLER

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want to speak to me since I was on silent retreat. After finally being silent long enough, it appeared He did want to speak to me. But He wanted my full attention, not my “just give me a second and let me get this first” attention. He wanted me to give Him all of my cares and, especially, all of my children. This was tough, but I did it. In the end, I released them out of my clenched hands and into His loving hands instead. It still might be the best decision I have ever made.

It was utterly refreshing not being “tethered” to a device which none of us can take with us. What

will heaven feel like without phones? Well, I bet it will feel like heaven!

“After the earthquake, fire — but the Lord was not in the fire; after the fire, a light silent sound.” — 1 Kings 19:12

When was the last time you shut your cell phone off for a day, or even an hour?

When was the last time you were completely silent and allowed God to speak to you in a whisper?



## “TRANSFORMED BY THE SACRED LITURGY” THE CELEBRATION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

In a limited way, the liturgy can be compared to a story or a film – upon a first reading or viewing, we might understand the basic outline of the narrative, yet through every subsequent encounter, the story further unfolds before us, becoming richer and more complex.

Often, inquisitive children teach us about how to understand a story or the Mass. As a child inquires about the priest’s green vestments, the foregrounded wreath or the presence of palm branches, we might pause to recall the symbolism undergirding the rich rituals of the liturgy.

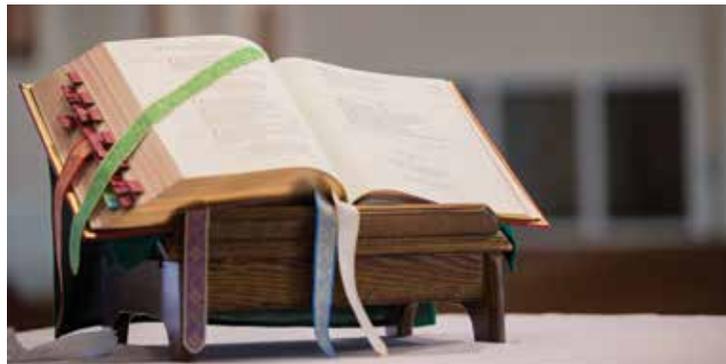
There is a sense of the sacred in the liturgy, but its rituals and ceremonies can appear as empty pantomimes when divorced from their meaning. Far from empty signs, the liturgy is the celebration of the Paschal mystery, of Christ’s passion, death, resurrection and glorification by which He “accomplished the work of our salvation” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1067).

From the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning public service or worship, liturgy in the Christian tradition refers to the communal participation of the people in the work of God, and God is always present and at work in the liturgy, acting in and with the Church through the sacraments.

Annually, the Church’s liturgical year is structured around the Paschal mystery, which we observe every Sunday. We begin each year with a season of anticipating Christ’s birth, and following a celebration of Christ’s Incarnation, we gradually enter a period of preparation for the Easter Triduum, for His passion, death and Resurrection. The year closes with a period of ordinary time – a time to grow in our faith and in living out the Gospel.

Daily, the Liturgy of the Hours unifies the Church Militant in prayers said by the clergy and increasingly by the laity. As the liturgical calendar structures our year, the Liturgy of the Hours structures our day, offering us an opportunity to consecrate each present moment to Christ.

Ultimately, the liturgical life of the Church “revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments” (CCC 1113), for we receive God’s grace to fortify us in our spiritual lives and as His disciples



through the sacraments, particularly the Holy Mass.

The Mass nurtures us spiritually, inviting us to reflect on the Paschal mystery and to lift our hearts to God as individuals and a community through spoken and sung prayer.

The Mass moves us corporeally, drawing us to sit as we listen to the Word, to stand as we unanimously profess our faith, and to kneel as the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Mass inspires us apostolically, sending us out to proclaim the Gospel and to share Christ with our brothers and sisters.

Though the “source and center” of all prayer, the liturgy and a sense of the sacred has, in some ways, become marginalized in the American Church. Once robust parishes are seeking to rebuild, but they frequently overlook the connection between the empty pews and the decentralization of the liturgy, which was underscored by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

“I am convinced that the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is, to a large extent, due to the disintegration of the liturgy,” Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote in his autobiography *Milestones*.

Something in the simplicity of the child’s experience of the liturgy teaches us to return to what we might call the basics of the faith – meaning a love for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments and the rituals of the Church. Only through the liturgy are we nurtured on our stewardship journey and inspired to proclaim the Gospel.

As Archbishop Alexander Sample from the Diocese of Portland, Ore., writes, “If we are transformed by the sacred liturgy, then we, as believers, can help transform the culture.”

# SACRAMENT SERIES: *Marriage*

## THE GRACE TO JOURNEY TOGETHER: THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

It's a story with which we are familiar — the Wedding Feast at Cana, the site of Jesus' first miracle. The couple, whose wedding was being celebrated, ran out of wine, and at the request of the Blessed Mother, Jesus turned water into wine.

And while we may know the story, we can often forget the significance of His action — not just for the newlyweds, whose reception was able to continue, but also for the Church, and for all married couples.

"We just got back from the Holy Land and saw where Jesus was at Cana, where He did His first miracle," Deacon Gary Mizeur says. "His presence at that wedding shows us that marriage is a sacrament."

"We renewed our vows there, at Cana," he adds. "It brought back all the feelings of 40 years ago, the excitement, the fears, everything — all those emotions flooded back to me."

Deacon Gary and his wife, Theresa, will celebrate 40 years of marriage, this year. The couple — who met through mutual friends, and now have a daughter and two granddaughters — have felt the graces of the Sacrament of Marriage in many different ways over the years.

"When we got married and we went before God, that was a covenant, never to be broken," Theresa says. "God is always present in our lives and He continually blesses us, even if we're struggling, He allows us to grow and that's a powerful blessing. There are so many good things that come from marriage."

"I always remember a priest [saying] to us, 'To make a marriage last, you have to remember three things — you have to love your spouse completely, exclusively and forever,'" Deacon Gary says. "I think both Theresa and I do that to



*Deacon Gary and Theresa Mizeur renewed their wedding vows while on pilgrimage in Cana.*

the best of our abilities."

The Mizeurs emphasize the importance of communication in marriage, not only with each other, but also with God, in prayer.

"In marriage, you have to communicate," Deacon Gary says. "We have to also communicate with God and bring God into our marriage."

"Sometimes the communication with God is just praying, I don't understand where he or she is at," Theresa adds. "And God

opens your mind and heart so you begin to understand where that other person is at."

For Deacon Gary and Theresa, understanding marriage as a sacrament also impacts the way that they handle conflict.

"Every couple is going to have 10 irreconcilable differences," Deacon Gary says. "There are times you have to say, 'How am I going to deal with this? How does God want me to deal with this?' You have to decide, 'Yes, I'm going to be married today, I'm going to do the right thing.'"

"God allows you to accept the differences in your spouse and you grow from them," Theresa adds. "Maybe you don't like the fact that your spouse does certain things and you feel like you can't stand it, but you grow from it."

Deacon Gary and Theresa encourage couples that may be on the fence as to whether or not they want to be married in the Church to consider the value and grace of the sacrament.

"If you really love the person, wouldn't you want to go in front of the Church, the community, God, and declare that love in the bonds of marriage?" Deacon Gary says.

"It's the most joyous thing in the world," Theresa says.

*If you would like more information on the Marriage Preparation Program at Spirit of Life, please contact the parish office at 701-663-1660.*



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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.

## SHARING THE BEAUTIFUL GIFT OF MUSIC THROUGH THE CANTORS MINISTRY *continued from front cover*

see the beauty of it all the more.

“Music gives us time to meditate and helps us get to know Christ better as we worship,” Jess says. “It can also give us inner strength, and bring peace to our minds. There are many forces that can pull us down nowadays, but music can lift us back up.”

Currently, Jess leads the music for the 6 p.m. Sunday Mass at Spirit of Life along with his sister, Janelle Thomas. He also sings in the Christmas and Easter choirs at times.

“So many people have told me how much our music means to them,” he says. “They say it is meaningful and inspiring, and it brings them peace. People have really encouraged us to keep singing. They tell us that they love to see us up there. These kind of comments have kept us going through the years.”

Ultimately, Jess has found that despite the sacrifices it may entail, being a faithful steward of his gifts is definitely worth the cost.

“Singing for Mass every Sunday evening is a big commitment, and you have to fit your life schedule around it,” Jess says. “But it’s worth it!”



*Jess Friesz has served as a cantor for 25 years.*

*If you would like more information about the Music Ministry, please contact  
Director of Liturgy of Music Dominick Goettle at 701-663-1660.*