

# Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

## OUR ANNUAL KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS FISH FRYS AT SPIRIT OF LIFE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

It has developed into a Lenten tradition here in Mandan. We are blessed with two Knights of Columbus Councils – 14816 here at Spirit of Life, and 6186 at Christ the King. The two Councils work together on the annual Lenten fish frys, alternating locations throughout Lent so that each Friday night, a Fish Fry is offered at one of the parishes.

All the good works done by the Knights of Columbus are based upon their four core principles – Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism. And to be sure, Charity and Service are hallmarks of the Knights. In the past decade, worldwide the Knights have donated \$1.475 billion to charity and given almost 700 million hours in support of the Church and charitable works. At a recent audience, Pope Francis commended and thanked the Knights. “On this occasion I wish to express my gratitude for the unfailing support the Knights of Columbus have always provided to the Church, to the Holy See, and to me personally. This support is both financial and spiritual. It can be seen in your daily prayers, sacrifices, and the apostolic works of so many Knights in their local councils, in their parishes, and in their communities.”

Thanks to the efforts of Fr. Michael J. McGivney in New Haven, Conn., the Connecticut State Legislature chartered the first Knights of Columbus Council in 1882. From that beginning, the Knights have grown from a few members to more than



14,000 Councils and almost 2 million members in the United States and 16 other countries.

For a number of years, the two Mandan Knights Councils have offered the fish frys throughout Lent. Of course, Catholics – 14 years and older – are to abstain from eating meat on Fridays during Lent, and these fish frys provide a way to make that easy, convenient, and quite tasty.

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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. It is fitting that God should do it, because only an infinite God could rid us of the infinite debt we owed by our sin. It is 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? Even more staggering, what is He really asking when He exhorts us, in turn, to take up our cross and follow Him?

Jesus freely gave His life for the Church, and He calls us to do the same. Some of us may, in fact, give our entire lives for the Church. But 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, 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 — 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**

## A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

# LENT IS MORE THAN PREPARATION FOR EASTER

Dear Parishioners,

In 2013, Pope Francis issued his first significant work. It was what is called an “apostolic exhortation” titled *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium* in Latin). While Rome may use fancy words for some of these things, an “exhortation” of this sort does not change any official Church rules or traditions. However, it does offer advice and encouragement about how we should live our lives.

Pope Francis offers this kind of guidance on a regular basis, but this one in particular seems to present us with suggestions that are worthy of our consideration, especially during Lent. The pope called us to become missionary disciples: “The Church which ‘goes forth’ is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 24).

Speaking about his exhortation, Pope Francis said, “One of the riches of the Second Vatican Council was to remind the Church of the two ‘lenses’ of the season of Lent: baptismal and penitential.” In fact, Vatican II noted specifically, “The two elements which are especially characteristic of Lent – the recalling of baptism or the preparation for it, and penance – should be given greater emphasis in the liturgy and in liturgical catechesis. It is by means of them that the Church prepared the faithful for the celebration of Easter, while they hear God’s word more frequently and devote more time to prayer” (*Companion to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1348).

It might be well for us to keep these in mind during Lent. There were vows made during our baptism, and this is the time of year to try to fulfill those vows, in addition to reaffirming them. We are given various opportunities to renew these vows, and we may tend to do it automatically without a thought. Now, however, is the time to think. Perhaps during Lent, we can renew these vows as families



– and we must not necessarily do it in church or at a Mass. Then, we need to do something during Lent to help each of us understand what that renewal means.

The other important part of Lent pointed out by Pope Francis has to do with penance. Most of us have heard the traditional practices of Lent – fasting, prayer, reception of the Sacraments, and almsgiving. These are things that may bring us closer to Christ. By fasting, we may gain a greater understanding of the

hunger the Lord feels for our souls; by increased prayer, we join in union with God; through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, we become a greater part of that union with God; through giving alms, we empty ourselves in part, just as Jesus emptied Himself for us on the cross.

This is a time to do more than prepare for Easter. This is a time to change how we may approach living and our faith. God bless you now and throughout this holiest of seasons.

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



## BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR

### **What is a Stewardship Renewal?**

This isn't a parish fundraiser – far from it. Our annual Stewardship Renewal is the time when we ask each other to re-prioritize the way we use God's gifts in the Church. It is the time we write down how we will support Spirit of Life.

### **Why should I fill out a commitment card?**

Your Commitment Card allows you to make commitments to prayer, parish ministries, and offertory giving, or what we at Spirit of Life call “time, talent, and treasure.” There's a two-fold reason to complete your card. First, it is an excellent opportunity to move forward spiritually and personally. Second, when you fill out a card, our parish is much better able to manage our many volunteers and make budgeting decisions.

### **How many parish ministries are there at Spirit of Life?**

“Ministry” is a general term for any parish group, organization, or regular activity. There are dozens of ministries in our parish. You can sign up for certain ministries, or re-commit yourself if you're already involved.

### **What if I sign up for a ministry, but later find I'm not very interested?**

You are not making a solemn promise to participate in a particular ministry when you mark it on your commitment card. If you find that the parish group is different than you thought, or simply that their meeting time doesn't fit your schedule, you can change your mind. There are plenty of other ministries to consider.

### **I'm hesitant to make a firm financial pledge. What if I lose my job?**

Your commitment card isn't a legal contract. If your circumstances change, your gift will change. In Scripture, we are asked to “give according to our means.” So, if you lose your job, you may be unable to give at the level you pledged. Likewise, if you get a promotion, you may be able to give more. That is why at Spirit of Life, our standard of giving is based upon a percentage of income.

### **What happens if I don't fill out a commitment card?**

Returning a card is an important part of being an active member of Spirit of Life. If for some reason you lose your card, we'll send you a reminder letter with an extra commitment card. Please make every effort to return it!

## **Time, Talent, and Treasure**

*Please bring your Commitment Card to Mass on Commitment Sunday, March 25-26  
How will you use your time, talent, and treasure in our parish?*

### **Stewardship of Time**

Our definition of Stewardship of Time: Using my time on earth wisely; making time for personal prayer, family prayer, and quality time with friends and loved ones.

The bottom line about prayer: Without prayer, we cannot thrive spiritually. As Catholic Christians, it is a necessity to spend time each day speaking to God. This includes reading Scripture

and saying prayers such as the Our Father and Hail Mary, but even more importantly, it should include a heart-to-heart conversation with Jesus. He wants us to bring him all our fears, longings, needs, and desires.

### **What kind of Time commitments should I make?**

Your commitment card lists several suggestions for how to spend time with God in prayer. Review

# Stewardship Renewal

your current prayer life and take a step forward. For instance, start having daily prayers with your children or spouse. Commit to praying the rosary on the way to work or reading scripture before bed each night.

## Stewardship of Talent

Our definition of Stewardship of Talent: Using my God-given abilities to strengthen the Church and help others, especially through parish ministries and activities.

The bottom line about parish ministry: No Catholic Christian exists in a vacuum. Scripture makes it clear that we must function within the wider faith community, putting our gifts in the service of others. It's not enough to go to Sunday Mass; we need to be involved in parish life and ministry.

## What kind of Talent commitments should I make?

If you're not involved in anything in our parish, now is the perfect opportunity to take a step forward. Check out our commitment card for a list of ministries. If you're already involved, re-commit

yourself to the important work you do. And if you feel God is calling you forward – sign up for something new!

## Stewardship of Treasure

Our definition of Stewardship of Treasure: The wise and just management of my financial resources; giving a proportionate amount of my income to the parish.

The bottom line about financial support: We need to take seriously the Biblical concept of the tithe, and start giving based on a percentage of income. It's our responsibility to support the Church with our personal involvement and our financial support.

## What kind of Treasure commitments should I make?

Our goal at Spirit of Life is to give 5 percent of our income to the offertory. Grab a calculator and figure out your target gift based on your total household income. Then make a plan for increasing your gift incrementally to reach 5 percent. During our Stewardship Renewal, choose a weekly or monthly gift, and be faithful to it for the next year.

**THE FOUR PILLARS of a STEWARDSHIP PARISH**

**TIME**  
Spending Time with God in Prayer

Prayer is the beginning of stewardship. Only when we spend time with God in prayer are we spiritually prepared to offer ourselves in service to others.

Check the circle next to your prayer commitments:

- Attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days
- Attend weekday Mass at least once a week
- Adore the Eucharist once a month
- Spend at least 20 minutes a day in personal prayer
- Pray together with my loved ones
- Read the Bible for at least one hour a week
- Pray the Rosary at least weekly
- Go to Reconciliation every other month
- Schedule time for a spiritual retreat
- Invite a friend or acquaintance to Mass
- Pray for the sick of our parish

**THE GIFT OF MY TIME, TALENT AND TREASURE IS THE RIGHT SIZE:**

- When I can no longer make my own decisions for the size of the gift (sick or aged).
- When I can honestly state that the gift is sacrificial as I offer it in thanksgiving to God.
- When I can honestly state that in the giving of the gift, I am being "renewed" with God and will still.

**TALENT**  
Using My Talents in Parish Ministries

You may read about each of the ministries listed below in your Stewardship Handbook. When you sign up, the leader will call to explain how to get involved.

Currently involved  interested in joining

**INTENTION**

- After School
- Liturgical Environment
- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
- Hospitality Minister / Visitor
- Lector
- Nursery
- Pastoral Minister of the Blessed Sacrament

**MUSIC MINISTRY**

- Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter Liturgies
- Parishes
- Schools
- Weddings
- Weekend & Holy Day Liturgies
- Youth Choir

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

- Adult Faith Formation
- Catechists of the Good Shepherd
- Confirmation
- First Reconciliation & First Communion
- Grades 1-8 Religious Education
- Marriage Preparation Sponsor/Couple
- Senior High Youth Group (Grades 9-12)

**TREASURE**  
Making a Consistent Gift to the Offertory

In thanksgiving for God's gifts, each household at Spirit of Life is asked to give a specific percentage of income based on the 5% household tithe.

**5% TO SPIRIT OF LIFE plus 1% to the diocese 4% to other charities**

**My Offertory pledge to Spirit of Life Roman Catholic Church:**

Percentage of household income:  %

Please complete either a weekly or monthly offertory gift:

weekly gift: \$  /  = \$  annually

OR

monthly gift: \$  /  = \$  monthly

**Weekly giving based on proportion of income:**

Amount of 5% household income to give toward giving 5% of their income to the parish. Some families may have difficulty meeting the goal of 5%. If so, by reducing your weekly gift incrementally, you may reach an amount that you think is right for you.

if your income is:	5000	400	50
Annual income	\$20,000	\$1,600	\$160
Monthly income	\$1,667	\$133	\$13
Weekly income	\$400	\$33	\$3
Bi-weekly income	\$800	\$66	\$6

**2017 STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT CARD**

First & Last Name (one per line): \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please bring this card to Mass on March 25/26, or mail using the envelope provided. Thanks and God bless you!

**THE FOUR PILLARS of a STEWARDSHIP PARISH**

"HE HAS SHOWED YOU, O MAN, WHAT IS GOOD; AND WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU BUT TO DO JUSTICE, AND TO LOVE KINDNESS, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD?" MICAH 6:8

**Spirit of Life**  
Roman Catholic Church  
2017 STEWARDSHIP HANDBOOK

## TIME, OPENNESS AND DEDICATION

### The Swenson Family

If you were to walk into Nate and Becca Swenson's home this evening, you might be greeted by a delightful scene of children excitedly making the sign of the cross, "blessing" their siblings' foreheads before bedtime. Or maybe you would see a couple, humbly reflecting on their day, with God and each other. You might even notice a small prayer table filled with sacred images, just the right height for the prayers of small people. You might think they were some of those people, who are just naturally "saints," who happen to have perfect kids, as well.

And you'd be wrong.

For the Swensons, the journey to become a family built on prayer has taken time, openness and dedication.

"We grew into [praying as a family]," says Nate, who grew up in a Lutheran family. "Growing up, we only prayed at meals and went to church on Sundays."

"My family didn't really pray together," Becca says. "We sometimes prayed at meals."

High school sweethearts Nate and Becca – who have now been married for 13 years – are parents to Andrew, 9; Lainey, 7; Levi, 5; and Nora, 2; and a new baby, due to make his or her appearance late this summer.

Although Nate became Catholic through the RCIA process just before they were married, and the couple joined Spirit of Life shortly afterwards, they didn't immediately jump "all in" to their faith. However, as their family grew, they began to realize they wanted their faith and prayer to grow, as well.

It started out with Becca saying memorized prayers and the list of people she was praying for on her way to dropping baby Andrew off at daycare and on her way to work. Then, they started praying at meals, and adding in a little bedtime prayer routine. It wasn't long before the couple who had previously thought praying together was "really awkward," had found a little prayer book and started just picking one to read together before bed.

"We just used rote prayer to start with and get that time together to pray, and eventually we moved to just praying out loud, and more of an examination of conscience," Nate says.

Now, they begin the day with one of their favorite



*Nate and Becca Swenson, along with their children – (from left) Andrew (9), Nora (2), Lainey (7), and Levi (5) – are parishioners at Spirit of Life. The family will welcome their fifth child this summer.*

prayer traditions.

"God gave us this great gift of coffee," says Becca, smiling, recalling advice she heard from a religious sister. "Get up early and have your coffee with your spouse! After I heard that, Nate and I have been consistently doing that in the morning."

The couple begins by honoring the other person, apologizing for any hurts, and checking in on how the other is doing. Then, they read the daily Mass readings, and spend some time sitting together in silent prayer, before the kids wake up.

"It's one of the single best things we've done for our marriage," Nate says. "With work and kids, it can be easy to not talk to your spouse alone and this gives you that time and space where you can open your hearts to each other."

"It's not easy with really little kids or pregnancy," Becca adds. "But now, I think it's so valuable I wouldn't be able to give it up."

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## TIME, OPENNESS AND DEDICATION

### The Swenson Family *continued from page 6*

“We sit in front of an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary,” Nate adds. “It’s really tough to be uncharitable to each other in that environment. It brings a sense of peace and openness.”

Bedtime prayer is also a significant part of their life as a family. They pray a memorized prayer, thank God for blessings of the day, offer prayer requests, pray a Hail Mary for each of their vocations, ask for the intercession of the saints, and close with everyone “blessing” each other.

“We’ve had so many prayers answered, which just shows me the impact of children praying,” Becca says. “They have beautiful and amazing faith. If I ask them to pray, they never forget. They are powerful little vehicles of prayer.”

The Swensons have found that routine has been fundamental to the success of their prayer as a family.

“If you don’t plan to do it and make time, you’re not going to do it,” Becca says.

“As you start adding things one at a time and create that habit, it just becomes the culture of your family,” Nate adds. “Think of brushing your teeth in the morning – you wouldn’t go a day without brushing your teeth. Prayer becomes like that. I can’t imagine not doing it.”

As prayer has become a habit, it’s also made it easier to engage the children’s participation.

“The more we make it a routine, they don’t want to be left out of that time,” Nate says.

“Now they’re upset if they get sent to their room instead of getting to pray,” Becca adds.

They have also found it helpful to have the support of other families, such as the small group that they meet with weekly to pray the Rosary, together as families.

“It was powerful for me to realize in praying with other people, how much that deepened my love for them,” Nate says. “It’s an edifying experience to be around other families trying to do the same things we are.”

“We’re all in the same boat,” Becca adds. “We all have similar struggles but we pray for each other.”

The Swensons encourage other families to find ways to incorporate more prayer into their lives,

whether it’s a morning or bedtime routine, praying at meals, starting a weekly family Rosary, or taking your kids to Eucharistic Adoration

“It slowly happens over time – don’t try to do it all at once,” Nate says. “It’s important to realize that you need to pray as a married person, not as a monk or a nun. You have other responsibilities. It’s okay if you’re not praying all day, every day. Be realistic about your goals.”

“Families are different, so whatever works for you,” Becca adds. “Your child already belongs to God and has the capacity for a relationship to Him – all you’re doing is giving them the words to speak to this great and awesome God that they belong to. All you need to do is give them some of the words and the environment.”

Nate notes that, at first, he didn’t entirely realize the true value and power of prayer.

“You almost have to start doing it in faith and obedience,” he says. “And the fruits may not be realized for a while, but then you start to see them.”

They also encourage families who may struggle with one of the spouses not wanting to participate in family prayer to be patient, add things slowly and, with your children, pray for them.

“Keep inviting them,” Becca says. “Be open to hearing their suggestions or hang-ups.”

“None of our prayer life happened because of us – it’s all God,” Nate says. “So, ask Him for help to get started and persevere in prayer. He will bring good fruit.”

**Nate and Becca recommend these books to help you get started on family prayer. Both are available on Amazon.**

***A Short Guide to Praying as a Family: Growing Together in Faith and Love Each Day***  
by the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia Congregation and Fr. Lawrence Lew O.P.

***The Little Oratory: A Beginner’s Guide to Praying in the Home***  
by David Clayton and Leila Marie Lawler

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## 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.

## OUR ANNUAL KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS FISH FRYS

*continued from front cover*

The fish frys begin on the first Friday after Ash Wednesday, March 3, and continue throughout Lent until April 7 – the Friday prior to Palm Sunday. Per this year's alternating weekly schedule, the fish frys are arranged as follows:

- ❖ March 3, Christ the King
- ❖ March 10, Spirit of Life
- ❖ March 17, Christ the King
- ❖ March 24, Spirit of Life
- ❖ March 31, Christ the King
- ❖ April 7, Spirit of Life

Our Mandan fish frys have truly become a community event, bringing together people from many backgrounds, especially our Catholic communities.

The two Councils have completely coordinated

the event this year so that the menu, prices and times are the same regardless where you might go. The fish frys are each Friday night from 5-7 p.m. The price is \$9 for an adult and \$4 for a child in grades K-6, and there is a maximum family price of \$35 to serve the whole family. The menu includes deep-fried fish, jumbo shrimp, macaroni and cheese, potatoes, cole slaw, buns, drinks, and dessert. No matter how you look at it, this is a great way for the family to have dinner together on Fridays during Lent!

*For more information on the fish frys or on the Knights of Columbus in general, please contact Spirit of Life Grand Knight Dave Trnka at 701-202-4927.*