

# Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

## SACRAMENT SERIES: *First Communion*

### GROWING IN A FRIENDSHIP WITH CHRIST THROUGH FIRST COMMUNION

According to John and Esther Sayler, their son, Jack, isn't quite the same since he received his First Holy Communion.

"We think he feels a little more 'grown up' now that he has received his First Communion," John says. "He doesn't play or read books at Mass anymore — instead, he follows the Mass. He serves as an altar boy now, as well, and he feels proud to do so."

In fact, Jack's friendship with Christ seems to have deepened in a beautiful way, and being a Catholic means more to him than ever before.

"Jack has grown up in the Catholic Church, and has become more curious about the Church with age," John says. "Through his CCD classes, he has come to realize the importance and significance of the sacrament. We think Jack sees taking Communion as having more of a mature connection to God."

Preparing for such a meaningful moment on the path of discipleship, however, didn't come without due preparation of heart, soul and mind.

"He became interested in receiving Communion by watching others receive during Mass," Esther says. "He started to talk about his desire in his second year of CCD, and we helped prepare him by discussing the importance of it with him. He attended CCD weekly at our parish, and



*The Sayler family with Msgr. Chad Gion on Jack's day of First Communion — May 7, 2017. (Top row) Msgr. Chad, John, Kate, Esther; (bottom row) Jack, Ben, Adam.*

*continued on page 2*

## **SACRAMENT SERIES: FIRST COMMUNION** *continued from front cover*

studied many important faith topics.”

Furthermore, John and Esther enjoyed reading the Bible with their son, and watching him develop his spiritual life.

“Jack prays every night,” John says. “He prays the Our Father and Hail Mary, and we also have him pray individual prayers every night. We have him tell God what he’s thankful for, pray for others, and also pray for help with struggles in his life. This helps him think much deeper about what he’s praying about, and not just go through the motions.”

As dedicated Catholic parents, John and Esther have heartfelt hopes for the further growth of Jack’s spiritual life, as well as his continual reception of the Body of Christ. Along with Jack, 9, John and Esther are also parents to Ben, 7; Adam, 4; and Kate, 2.

“We hope that this is just a springboard into his faith as both a young adult and as an adult,” John says. “We hope that what he has been exposed to already in the Church will only leave him wanting to learn and grow in faith even more. As parents, we have a small window in their lives to teach them about God and the faith. We hope to show all of our children how God wants them to live and how to become good stewards of faith into adulthood.”

Jack found the experience of receiving the Body of Christ to be something he will always cherish.

“My First Communion was so meaningful to me because it was my first time receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus,” he says. “I will always try to get to Mass on Sundays and receive Him when I am in the state of grace.”

When asked what he would say to other children who are preparing for the First Confession and Communion, Jack offers a profound perspective.

“Jesus will be with you to help you,” he says. “This is advice someone gave me when I was nervous and when I remembered these things, I

wasn’t nervous anymore.”

As St. Pope John Paul II once said in an address to First Communicants, “Dear friends, there is no doubt that an unforgettable meeting with Jesus is First Holy Communion, a day to be remembered as one of life’s most beautiful. The Eucharist, instituted by Christ at the Last Supper, on the night before His passion, is a sacrament of the New Covenant — rather, the greatest of the sacraments. In this sacrament, the Lord becomes food for the soul under the appearances of bread and wine. Children receive this sacrament solemnly a first time — in First Holy Communion — and are encouraged to receive it afterward as often as possible in order to remain in close friendship with Jesus.”

*“We hope that this is just a springboard into [our son’s] faith as both a young adult and as an adult. We hope that what he has been exposed to already in the Church will only leave him wanting to learn and grow in faith even more. As parents, we have a small window in their lives to teach them about God and the faith. We hope to show all of our children how God wants them to live and how to become good stewards of faith into adulthood.” — John Sayler*

## A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

# MARCH — A TIME TO TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT THE EXAMPLES WE FOLLOW

Dear Parishioners,

This month of March is a significant time for us as Catholics. We are in the midst of Lent, and then we celebrate Holy Week, with Easter occurring just after the end of the month, on April 1. In addition, many may point to the month of March as a time we celebrate the Irish on March 17, the Feast of St. Patrick.

However, two days after that is the Feast of St. Joseph on March 19 — and for many in the world, that is more important. St. Joseph was, of course, the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the foster father of Jesus Christ.

Everything we know about Joseph comes to us from Holy Scripture. It might be said that, in order to understand him completely, we must read between the lines. The Catholic Church has designated the month of March as the month of St. Joseph. Yet, there is not a single example of Joseph saying something that can be quoted in the Bible. We can assume he was a man of few words — in turn, we may consider that he speaks to us through his actions. It is also clear that he was a humble man. Many point to him as an example of what a good father is and should be.

St. Joseph provides an example to all of us. Think of some of his strengths — he was obedient; he put his own needs aside to assure that Jesus and Mary were cared for; he surely trusted in God, even when God's will may not have made complete sense to him.



Those traits give each of us some idea of what we need to do in life. Do we only embrace those parts of our faith that make sense to us or that we find agreeable? Do we put the needs of others before our own? Our lives are filled with crosses and challenges, but do we trust in the Lord as Joseph did? Do our actions show us to be good Catholics and Christians? What kinds of examples are we setting?

Lent and Easter are times for us to look closely at the answers to these questions. Joseph was a carpenter, a work-

er — and he obviously was not a man of wealth or prestige. By the time Jesus' public ministry begins, Joseph seems to disappear. Nevertheless, he was a man of royal origins. When St. Luke introduces him to us in Luke 1, he calls him "Joseph, of the house of David."

All of this leads us to know and believe that Joseph was someone we would classify as a "good steward." Who do we look up to? Do we seek to be like people like Joseph, or are our models more worldly and more successful in the eyes of others? St. Joseph is a wonderful example for us. We all need to be like him in many, many ways.

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

## TAKING A LEAP KAYLA ROETHLISBERGER REFLECTS ON ST. MARTIN'S PARISH

St. Martin's Parish may be small, but God is certainly doing some mighty things there! Thanks in large part to active parishioners like Kayla Roethlisberger, this mission parish of Spirit of Life provides a warm, vibrant faith community on the prairie for those living in and near Huff.

Kayla began attending St. Martin's in 2002 when she married her husband, Doug, who is a lifelong member of the parish. Kayla, too, had been raised in the Catholic Church.

"I grew up on a farm with my grandparents, and I remember having the priest come out to have Mass at the farm, and my grandmother praying the Rosary," she recalls. "I don't think I fully understood how important my faith was when I was a young adult, but at the time I got married, I knew how important it was to have the full Catholic Mass. I had that influence from my grandparents, and it was ingrained in me."

While her faith has always been a part of her life, Kayla experienced what she calls a "major conversion experience" shortly after her first child was born in 2007. As a new mother, Kayla began to dig deeper into her faith. With the guidance of many, including Catholic speaker and author Matthew Kelly — she read his books and attended some



*Kayla Roethlisberger with her husband, Doug, and their children, Case and Ashland*

of his events — Kayla was inspired to make her faith a bigger priority in family life.

Since then, serving the Lord whenever and however He calls has required some further leaps of faith. If you had told Kayla 10 years ago that she would now be serving as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, she certainly would not have believed you!

"I was so intimidated by the ministry that it was something I had never wanted to do," she

says. "So the fact that I became an Extraordinary Minister was definitely God-led. It was all Him. It started with me completely rejecting the idea, but I just kept feeling this pull at my heart. I felt like it was something I needed to do, and I felt God saying that it would be okay."

Serving as an Extraordinary Minister was so far out of Kayla's comfort zone that she refused to give it a try — until she came across a story about the

# AP OF FAITH

## STEWARDSHIP WAY OF LIFE AT ST. MARTIN'S

parish's patron saint that made her reconsider.

"I read about how St. Martin didn't want to be a bishop, because he was so humble and thought he could never do it," Kayla explains. "When I read that particular article, I felt God was speaking to me and saying, 'You think you can't do this, but I know you and want you to do it.' That just solidified for me. It has been a 'wow' kind of experience ever since, and becoming an Extraordinary Minister has given me an even deeper love of the Eucharist."

Not long ago, the Lord worked in a similar way in the heart of Case, the Roethlisbergers' 10-year-old son. When Case was too nervous to join the Altar Server Ministry, Kayla began praying regularly, knowing that if God wanted Case to serve, He would make it happen. Sure enough, one Sunday, Case was given a desire to serve, and he hasn't looked back since! Now he serves as both

a reader and an altar server at St. Martin's and at his school, Christ the King in Mandan. And his little sister, Ashland, 7, is excited about receiving her First Holy Communion this April.

For Kayla and Doug, raising their children in the faith has become a top priority.

"Together, Doug and I are trying to make sure that we live the faith as much as we possibly can and instill those values in our children," Kayla says. "I think we both have seen how living without that faith can be difficult, and so we want to show our children that God wants us to follow Him so we can live a better life. We want to show them in action the things that are important to us, show them a better life and what they have to hope for someday. When we put our faith first and trust in God, we definitely see the fruits of that."

Visit St. Martin's one Sunday and you may very well see Kayla serving as a lector or an Extraor-

dinary Minister of the Eucharist, or helping out with various tasks around the parish. Doug just might be up on a ladder somewhere after Mass making repairs, Case may be reading or serving at the altar, and Ashland will likely be taking it all in as she prepares for her First Communion.

St. Martin's is certainly blessed beyond measure with parishioners like these who give freely of themselves to help make this small parish such a wonderful place to worship. In turn, the Roethlisbergers are grateful to be a part of this special faith community.

"St. Martin's is a very small, but very welcoming and loving community," Kayla says. "It's just a beautiful, little old church on the prairie. It's good to be a part of it. Whether you have a huge parish or a small church, it doesn't matter — you're a part of that community and it is God's community as a whole. We're thankful to be able to come here and have priests and a parish so close."

*"Together, Doug and I are trying to make sure that we live the faith as much as we possibly can and instill those values in our children. I think we both have seen how living without that faith can be difficult, and so we want to show our children that God wants us to follow Him so we can live a better life. We want to show them in action the things that are important to us, show them a better life and what they have to hope for someday. When we put our faith first and trust in God, we definitely see the fruits of that."*

*— Kayla Roethlisberger*

## EXPLAINING OUR SACRAMENTAL WORLDVIEW

### *How Ordinary Things Are Crucial in the Christian Life*

Why does a parish need money? Perhaps the parish needs a new building, or must hire new staff members. Why might the parish need a new building or staff members? The parish may require a new Education Center, or need a talented new Music Director to further the mission of the parish. But what is the mission of the parish?

The parish mission is to locally perform the mission of the Church, which is to bring people into a living relationship with God and each other, through Jesus Christ. The parish staff, buildings, programs and money must all ultimately work toward this goal.

Various aspects of parish life may seem more directly connected to this mission than others. Sunday morning Mass obviously brings people into communion with each other and with God, as do many other parish ministries. But what might be regarded as the “ordinary” aspects — such as the Thursday night finance committee meeting, the new office computer system or new landscaping on church grounds — are also essential to the parish mission. We may think of these tasks merely as administrative, and having no connection to the spiritual elements of Catholicism.

However, this line of thought is thoroughly non-Catholic. Catholicism does not separate the temporal from the spiritual. It is no more unseemly to speak of money at Mass than it is to use water to baptize — or, for that matter, to speak of Christ as both human and divine. The Catholic worldview demonstrates that ordinary things are always conjoined with unseen realities. This is exactly how the Sacraments of the Catholic Church work — the bodily conveying spiritual grace.



Indeed, a sagging parish budget or peeling paint in the church building aren't simply administrative issues unrelated to the parish's spiritual mission. The two may be distinguished, but they should never be divorced. The entire operation of the parish is of one piece — everything sacred *and* ordinary should be incorporated into a singular mission.

Of course, the same is true for our personal lives. An authentic Christian doesn't compartmentalize his or her life into “time for God” and “time for me,” or even “God's money” and “my money.” Instead, a Christian is always conscious that everything is under the umbrella of God's providence.

A Christian understands that he or she fits into an ultimate plan that transcends the workaday world, yet also includes it.

As strange as it may seem, things like time and money — and parish budgets, candles and misalettes — are rungs on the ladder to heaven. St. Thomas Aquinas disagreed with philosophers who thought that material things, and even our own bodies, were shackles on the soul. He instead believed that we are extremely fortunate to exist as embodied creatures, being able to see God in physical things like mountains, smiling faces and, of course, bread and wine.

Catholics reject any notion of spirituality that excludes the material world. Instead, we believe that the same principle behind the Seven Sacraments — that God works through ordinary things — is applicable to our whole lives. So being conscious of how we spend our money and our time is, indeed, very Catholic.

## EMBRACING THE BEAUTY OF CATHOLICISM AT THE EASTER VIGIL

At the opening of the Easter Vigil each year, we have an opportunity to encounter the sign of our eternal redemption — Christ Our Light — in an unspeakably beautiful way, one that hushes our souls and gives us a glimpse of the Beatific Vision.

“At the beginning of the Vigil, we celebrate the Ceremony of Light,” says Director of Liturgy and Music Dominick Goettle. “The light starts from the center and fills the whole church. As each individual candle is lit, the light fills our hearts. The Easter Candle, which is a focal point on the altar, is such a significant symbol, is also lit, and the Easter Proclamation (the Exsultet) is prayed. It is a very powerful testimony showing us how, after a time of Lenten penance, the light of our salvation has finally come.”

The first Mass of Easter, the Easter Vigil, is celebrated between nightfall on Holy Saturday and daybreak of Easter Sunday.

“This is the most elaborate liturgy of the Church year,” Dominick says. “Everything culminates and is brought together in this Mass. The extra touches of symbolism and the way that the whole story of salvation history is proclaimed through the Mass and the Scriptures are so meaningful. It helps us to understand our history as Catholics — to understand where we come from.”



*The Light of Christ fills the whole church as the faithful share with one another the flame from the Paschal candle.*

Another meaningful symbol utilized during the Vigil is the baptismal font, where the *catechumens* receive the Sacrament of Baptism soon after the homily is given. Importantly, the Liturgy of the Word during the Easter Vigil provides a uniquely profound overview of Christianity.

*continued on back cover*

*“This is the most elaborate liturgy of the Church year. Everything culminates and is brought together in this Mass. The extra touches of symbolism and the way that the whole story of salvation history is proclaimed through the Mass and the Scriptures are so meaningful. It helps us to understand our history as Catholics — to understand where we come from.” — Dominick Goettle*

801 1st Street SE | Mandan, ND 58554  
Phone: 701-663-1660 | [myspiritoflife.com](http://myspiritoflife.com)

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.

## EMBRACING THE BEAUTY OF CATHOLICISM AT THE EASTER VIGIL

*continued from page 7*

“It includes a number of extra readings from the Old Testament that cover the course of history, and all of the ways that God has saved us,” Dominick says. “They show that Christ came to dispel the darkness, conquer death and bring us into eternal life.”

Because the Easter Vigil holds such “pride of place” on the liturgical calendar, bringing to life the authenticity of our sacred faith, it could also hold a place of priority on our personal calendars, as well.

“I encourage people to make it to the Vigil because it is the highest liturgical celebration of the year,” Dominick says. “We will have a full choir,

‘pulling out all the stops’ on the incense and the servers. Coming to the Vigil will help one to live and practice our Catholic faith throughout the year, and follow the Church’s calendar. I believe it is a very important part of our experience as Catholics.”

In order to prepare our souls to celebrate Easter wholeheartedly, Dominick has some helpful suggestions.

“If you sincerely practice Lent, the Easter Vigil will make more sense to you, and you will really be able to celebrate once Easter arrives,” he says. “The Church is so wise to have both seasons of fasting and celebration.”

*The Easter Vigil will take place at our parish on March 31 at 9 p.m.  
For more information, please contact  
Director of Liturgy and Music Dominick Goettle at 701-663-1660.*