

Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

ALL GLORY AND HONOR TO GOD: THE CARITAS AWARD

Thanks be to God! This was the thought of Sr. Mary Michael, CTC, and her fellow Carmelite sisters when they were first notified they were the recipients of Catholic Charities North Dakota's Caritas Award. Given annually to individuals or organizations who have performed outstanding works of love and service for humanity, it was our own beloved sisters who were chosen as this year's honorees. Yet, with characteristic humility, the sisters' focus remained outward, giving all glory to God and thinking only of the honor it was to our entire faith community.

"We were really very surprised to be chosen as the award's recipients," Sr. Mary Michael says. "We had never thought of ourselves in that way. All I could think of was what a great honor this was for Spirit of Life."

Sr. Mary Michael, Sr. Josephine, and Sr. Amal Grace were chosen, according to Catholic Charities, because of their continual efforts to serve both the homeless and less fortunate of the Mandan area. By helping to maintain and run our parish food pantry, soup kitchen, and other outreach programs, these holy women help ensure that Spirit of Life continues to serve as the hands and feet of Christ to others. And that, Sr. Mary Michael says, is what it's truly all about.

"Our ministry, day by day, is focused on growing support for the poor and in need," Sr. Mary

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Sr. Josephine, Sr. Amal Grace and Sr. Mary Michael, the 2018 recipients of Catholic Charities North Dakota's Caritas Award.



ST. ISIDORE'S SIMPLE STEWARDSHIP

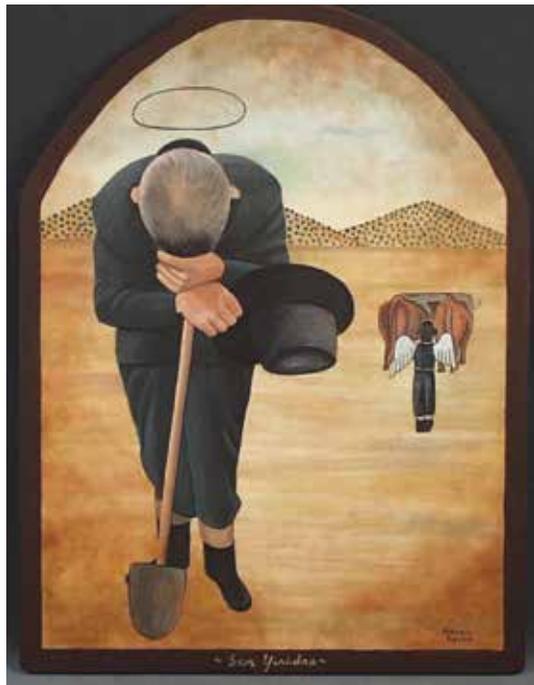
When we consider the lives of the saints, the first that usually come to mind are more than likely classed into four categories — martyrs, priests, religious, and great miracle workers. St. Isidore was none of these, and yet he is revered in Spain as one of “the five saints,” which include St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis Xavier, and St. Philip Neri, all of whom were canonized with him in the same year. His feast day is May 15.

The life of St. Isidore is a great testimony to how, with God’s grace, we can take the occurrences of a simple, mundane, and even sometimes difficult life and use them as opportunities for sanctification.

Isidore was born near Madrid, around the year 1070, into a peasant family. While still a young boy, he began working as a day laborer on the farm of Juan de Vergas, a wealthy landowner, just outside of Madrid.

Despite the hard work on Vergas’ farm, where Isidore spent the rest of his life in service, he did not complain and always tried his hardest to meet the tasks requested of him. Above all things, he upheld his relationship with Jesus. As he walked behind his plow, he would talk to God, offering up his work as a prayer. He rose up extra early each day before work to attend daily Mass. He would even spend his vacations touring the different churches of Madrid and the surrounding areas.

As hardworking as Isidore was, his fellow workers complained to Vergas that the pious laborer always arrived late for work because he attended Mass every day. Isidore could not deny the accusation, but he assured his employer that he always made a special effort to compensate for the extra minutes he spent in prayer. One day,



Vergas decided to see for himself whether Isidore was really slacking in his work. Hiding in the bushes, he watched as Isidore came out of church, went directly to the fields, and began his plowing. To Vergas’ astonishment, he saw a “man” with another plow beside Isidore, driving a team of white oxen. When he ran toward the mysterious team, it disappeared and Isidore only looked puzzled when Vergas asked him about it. “Sir, I work alone and know of none save God to whom I look for strength,” Isidore said. No doubt, God had sent His angels to help ensure that Isidore’s work would

not suffer because of his placing the spiritual above the temporal.

While working for Vergas, Isidore fell in love with and married a young woman, Maria Torribia, who shared his devotion and faith. They had one child, a son, who died while still a boy. A model of sanctity herself, Maria — also a canonized saint — served her husband faithfully all her life. Together, Isidore and Maria would look for ways to serve the poor, even though they had very little themselves. One story says that when Isidore brought a number of hungry people home with him one day, Maria realized as she scraped the bottom of the pot that there was no more stew. Isidore asked her to check one more time, and she was able to spoon out enough to feed everyone. They could not refuse an act of kindness to anyone.

At times, we might be tempted to think that we do not have the talents or the assets to be good stewards. But St. Isidore shows us by his simple, humble example that we can live out the call to discipleship in the smallest actions of charity and piety — that we only need do as much as we can, and trust that God will do the rest.

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

THE MONTH OF MARY: A TIME FOR CELEBRATION AND JOY

Dear Parishioners,

In the Catholic Church, we designate a particular devotion for each month — and May is when we honor our Blessed Mother Mary. Thus, this is a good time for us to think about and concentrate on our devotion to the Mother of God. Perhaps we can add a few more Marian prayers to our daily routine. Praying the Rosary might be even more important. Of course, that assumes that daily prayer is part of our daily routine — which it should be.

Our Blessed Mother is important to our faith and to our Church. Her willingness to serve in a way that allowed the Lord to take human form really made our salvation a possibility. Because of her complete trust in God, she lived her life free from sin, and after her life, she was assumed into heaven by the power of God and crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth.

She is, of course, not divine. We worship only our Lord Jesus Christ, but we honor Mary as a saint and in many other ways. We honor God when we remember the role of Mary in our salvation. Devotion to Mary always leads to Jesus Christ Himself.

Mary was joyous when she said “yes” to God. That is the kind of joy we need to seek — and we,



too, must say “yes” to the Lord. Let us be grateful to Mary for bringing us her Son. This is why we crown her on our Catholic version of Mother’s Day. Through Mary, we are given an invitation into the Catholic fold. Her feminine presence and the safety of her motherhood may help us grow.

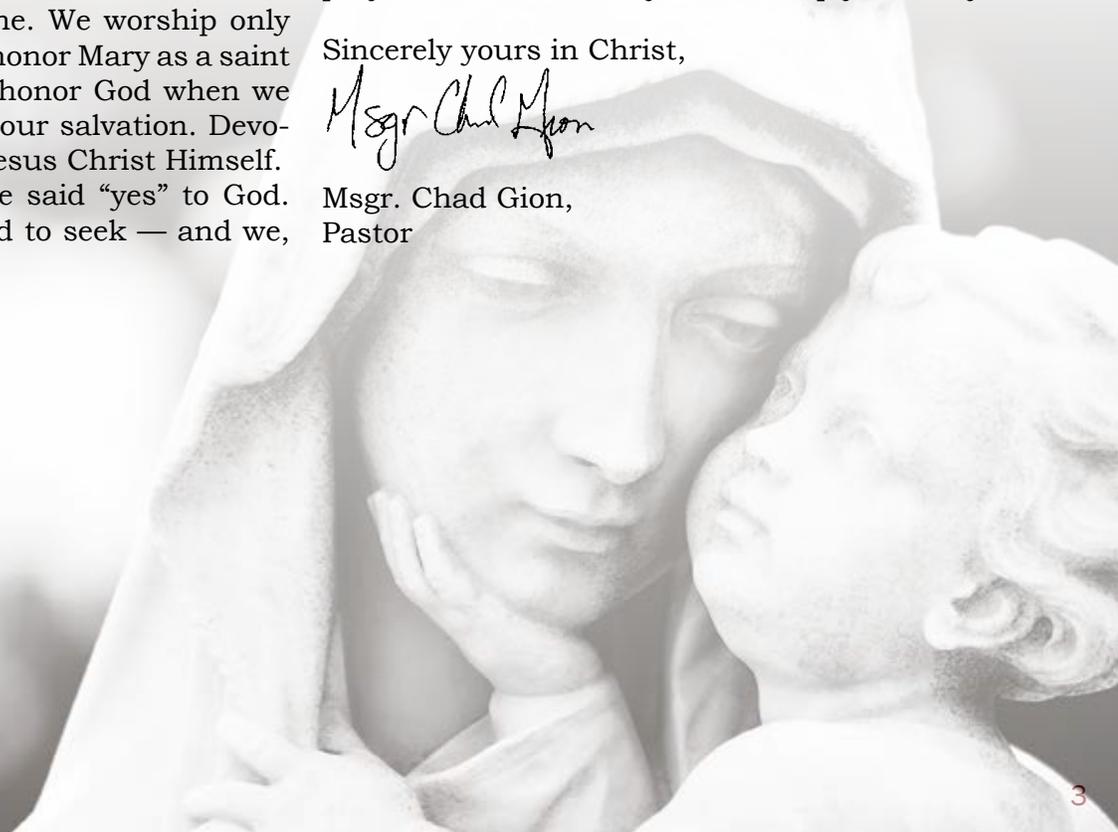
For most of us, this time of year is a month of growth in relation to nature. It is difficult not to have May as one of our favorite months for so many reasons. May is a beautiful time. We are called to make it even more beautiful, and we can do that as we serve and love one another.

I am deeply blessed to be your pastor. I may say that often, but it is true. My priesthood has been a blessing, and serving you all has made that blessing even more significant. I pray for you daily. Please pray for me. God bless you and keep you always.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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

Msgr. Chad Gion,
Pastor



SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT: THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Different images come to mind when reflecting on Sacrament of Confirmation. Maybe you remember the bishop giving you a “tap” on the cheek, as a reminder to be willing to suffer for Christ. Perhaps the scent of chrism, in the sign of a cross on your forehead, is one you’ll never forget. Or maybe picking a sponsor or a Confirmation saint was a decision that you gave much thought. But regardless of what stands out in your mind, when you received the Sacrament of Confirmation, you were anointed with oil, sealed with the Holy Spirit and fully initiated into the Catholic Church.

Each year, a group of young people from our parish joins the ranks of the fully initiated, receiving the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.

“Confirmation is a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit,” says Janelle Thomas, a parishioner whose oldest son, Ty, went through the Confirmation program two years ago, and whose younger son, Taylen, will be confirmed this fall.

“In Baptism, we make that choice for them, but in Confirmation, they have the choice,” she adds. “They’re making choices about what they believe and the decisions they want to make in their life.”

Most students spend a year preparing to receive the sacrament, which usually takes place during the fall of their sophomore year of high school. The preparation process includes attending youth group on Wednesday nights, as well as a weeklong retreat called Cor Christi Institute, the summer before their Confirmation.

The time of preparation seeks to help the young people learn about their faith, and it encourages them to embrace it personally. Cor Christi gives the teens a chance to spend time with other Catholic young people, faith-filled priests and passionate Catholic young adults. During this week, our Confirmandi have the opportunity to grow in their relationship with God through prayer, share in fellowship with others who share their beliefs, and learn about the teachings of the Church and how they apply to everyday life.

“Ty felt like it really strengthened and deepened his relationship with God — Confirmation and the whole preparation for Confirmation,” Janelle says.



Janelle Thomas’ oldest son, Ty, went through the Confirmation preparation program two years ago.

“He felt his relationship with God was really strengthened by going through Cor Christi and Confirmation.”

Confirmation has also helped deepen her sons’ faith, increasing their commitment to the Church.

“Life is tough — a lot of your friends aren’t involved in church or don’t really talk about it,” Janelle says. “They feel that what they’ve learned through Confirmation preparation makes them able to really talk to God. He’s not a stranger to them — they know Him. In their quiet moments, they just ask God to help them through the day.”

Janelle encourages other parents whose children might be hesitant about going through the preparation process or Confirmation.

“Just be patient with them,” she says. “Ty was like, ‘Mom, it’s summer. It’s a whole week. I can’t do this.’ But when we picked him up and he was like, ‘I’m so glad I was able to have this opportunity to go.’”

“Encourage them to be open and to try it,” she adds. “Ty would tell kids the same thing. He says it was one of the best weekends of his life. Pray about it every night and try to have your child talk to kids who have gone to Cor Christi because I haven’t met a kid who hasn’t loved it.”

Janelle also hopes that fellow parishioners will remember to pray for our young people, and that the grace of Confirmation would help our youth to

SACRAMENT SERIES: Confirmation.....

embrace the faith in their lives — now and in the years to come.

“Definitely pray for our young people,” Janelle says. “It’s tough what they have to go through. These years are such critical years for our kids. It’s my hope and prayer that they stay in the Church.

“I hope and pray that they do feel closer to God as they complete Confirmation,” she adds. “The

Holy Spirit gives us an increased ability to practice our faith in every aspect of our lives and to witness Christ in every situation. There are a lot of decisions these kids have to make as they get older. Hopefully, through Confirmation and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, they will know that all they have to do is ask for that grace from God and He will be there to provide if they believe and trust that.”

If you would like more information about our Confirmation preparation program, or to enroll your child, please contact our Director of Religious Education, Karen Eggers, at karen@myspiritoflife.com or 701-663-1660.

A CONFIRMATION PRAYER

*Holy Spirit,
Divine Consoler,
I adore You as my true God,
with God the Father and God the
Son.*

*I adore You and unite myself to
the adoration
You receive from the angels and
saints.*

*I give You my heart
and I offer my ardent
thanksgiving
for all the grace which You never
cease to bestow on me.*

*O Giver of all supernatural gifts,
who filled the soul of the Blessed
Virgin Mary,
Mother of God, with such immense
favours,
I beg You to visit me with Your
grace
and Your love and to grant me the
gift of holy fear,
so that it may act on me as a
check to prevent me*

*from falling back into my past sins,
for which I beg pardon.*

*Grant me the gift of piety,
so that I may serve You for the
future with increased fervor,
follow with more promptness Your
holy inspirations,
and observe your divine precepts
with greater fidelity.*

*Grant me the gift of knowledge,
so that I may know the things of
God and,
enlightened by Your holy teaching,
may walk,
without deviation, in the path of
eternal salvation.*

*Grant me the gift of fortitude,
so that I may overcome
courageously all the assaults of
the devil,
and all the dangers of this world
which threaten the salvation of
my soul.*

*Grant me the gift of counsel,
so that I may choose what is more
conducive to my
spiritual advancement
and may discover the wiles and
snares of the tempter.*

*Grant me the gift of
understanding,
so that I may apprehend the
divine mysteries
and by contemplation of heavenly
things detach my thoughts
and affections from the vain
things of this miserable world.*

*Grant me the gift of wisdom,
so that I may rightly direct all my
actions,
referring them to God as my last end;
so that, having loved Him and
served Him in this life,
I may have the happiness of
possessing Him eternally in the next.*

Amen.

AM I Enough

The calls started coming in on Wednesday evening as we entered the Black Hills. It was my friend, Sue, from Minnesota. She and her husband, Tom, had planned to come to my 50th birthday celebration Friday, but had contracted influenza and were down and out.

She promised if she felt better she would take a flight, because she really didn't want to miss it. I encouraged Sue to take care of herself and



Shelly Preszler is a member of Spirit of Life Parish. She enjoys writing about God's quiet moments of grace in her life.

hoped she would be feeling better soon.

The next morning on the ski lift, my phone rang again and when I answered there was a barely audible voice on the other end. My daughter, Katie, had just returned from Campus Student Health only to be told she too had influenza. She was wondering if she should still attend or cancel her flight. At this point I shifted the phone to her father, the physician. Later that evening, my teenage son, Joseph, woke to tell me he was feeling sick. I felt his hot forehead and gave him Tylenol and a cold drink.

At that moment I thought to myself, how can four of my loved ones, in three different states have influenza at the same time?

The next morning, we awoke to blizzard warnings and more cancellations — by the time 8:30 a.m. rolled around, three more of my friends called stuck at home while an ice storm blanketed the state of South Dakota. My brother, Jerry, and his wife, Carrie, didn't want to risk the icy roads either. At this point I grabbed my coat, boots and dog and headed off to the woods for a walk.

I cried the whole way to the stop sign at the end of the road and back.

I had planned the small party ever since my sister had celebrated her 50th the year before. That night last February was full of fun and excitement — a delicious dinner and then dancing at the historic Saloon #10. I remember telling her at the end of the evening, that I wanted the same thing for my birthday next year!

As I walked and cried, I thought an awful lot about Jesus — how He was deserted at the end and walked alone with a stranger from the crowd, Simon, who was coerced to walk along side Him. Although my friends and family had in no way abandoned me, I still felt utterly alone.

FOR YOU?

BY SHELLY PRESZLER

It was at this time I heard a small voice in my heart say, “Am I not enough for you?”

I pondered this prompting from Christ. Is He enough for me? Because in the end, it will be just the two of us. No friends available to vouch for my self-proclaimed “saintliness.” No husband, kids, or family to assure Christ, that yes, I did actually know Him. No, it will be just Jesus and me, and was He enough for me?

I really wanted to answer “yes” to Him right away, but I’m stubborn and at that point, I was in the depths of self-pity. I kept walking and thinking, praying and pondering. Was He enough for me?

Later that evening, as we headed out of the cabin to attend the party, my son Jonathan, and his cousin, Lucas, slid into a tree on the way up my parent’s slanted and icy driveway. These two were among the only few guests remaining in the dwindling party. They were unscathed but had to wait a couple hours for a tow truck. I laughed out loud, because I really can’t make up something like this!

When we arrived at the restaurant I was greeted by my sister, Sharon, and my brother, Joe, and their spouses. We all laughed at how the party of 25 had somehow dwindled to eight overnight. At the last minute, my brother, Jerry, and his wife, Carrie walked in to surprise us. It was wonderful to see their faces. My daughter-in-law, Alyssa, hailed the bartender and ordered four shots of fireball. As she whispered to me, “This party needs it.” We laughed some more, ate, drank and danced. And in the end, we had a really good time.

I truly won’t take my family or friends for granted ever again. Well, where would I be without them? However, the most valuable lesson from that train wreck weekend was: Yes, Jesus is really enough for me.

I heard a small voice in my heart say, “Am I not enough for you?” I pondered this prompting from Christ. Is He enough for me? Because in the end, it will be just the two of us. No friends available to vouch for my self-proclaimed “saintliness.” No husband, kids, or family to assure Christ, that yes, I did actually know Him. No, it will be just Jesus and me, and was He enough for me?

801 1st Street SE | Mandan, ND 58554
Phone: 701-663-1660 | 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.

CARITAS AWARD *continued from front cover*

Michael says. "We are trying to make sure that we are truly there for the poorest of the poor. We train them how to live, how to pray and, oftentimes, we end up bringing back those who have fallen away from God. They come to us for physical help, but we end up giving them that spiritual help, as well."

Born and raised in India, Sr. Mary Michael fell in love with Congregation of Teresian Carmelites after witnessing their charitable works within her own parish. Seeking to emulate this selfless love, she entered the congregation at age 19 and has since worked to live her life by the Prophet Isaiah's words in 61:1, "He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners."

Thus, for Sr. Mary Michael, the Caritas Award more than anything was a confirmation that she and



her fellow sisters truly are performing God's work.

"I feel like I'm really living out the Gospel and my vocation through this work at Spirit of Life," Sr. Mary Michael says. "For me, this award really confirms that we truly are doing God's work and for that we give all glory and honor to Him."

A Caritas Award Luncheon will be held on Tuesday, May 8, from 11:30-1 p.m. at the parish in celebration of this great honor. The luncheon is open and we encourage all parishioners to attend. Please RSVP with the attendee(s) name and contact information to dinner@catholiccharitiesnd.org or call Catholic Charities North Dakota at 701-235-4457.