

# Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

## “A SENSE OF FAMILY AND LOVE”

### OUR ANNUAL THANKSGIVING OUTREACH MEAL

Our Catholic church has recognized the importance of “thanksgiving” from its beginnings. In fact, the very concept of thanksgiving is at the heart of our Catholic faith. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all His benefits, for all that He has accomplished through creation, redemption, and sanctification. Eucharist means first of all ‘thanksgiving’” (1360).

Thanksgiving here in the United States has come to be on the fourth Thursday of November. For us here at Spirit of Life, Thanksgiving has been something we have experienced throughout our lives. However, there are those for whom this special day can be a challenge.

Our parish Outreach Ministry was established more than 25 years ago for the purpose of reaching out to those in need in our community and area. As part of this important ministry, we also established a Soup Kitchen – a Fellowship Luncheon Ministry – many years ago. Each Thursday, volunteers gather at the church to prepare and serve a meal to anyone who needs it, regardless of faith. Thus, on a normal Thursday, 120 to 150 people come to our parish for soup, a sandwich, a dessert, and a beverage – last year, more than 4,000 meals were served from mid-September until mid-May. However, because of the special nature of Thanksgiving, it seemed appropriate to do something additional at this time of year. Because of conflicts with other community organi-



*A Thanksgiving elf, Tom Stastny (Leader for the Thanksgiving meal), and longtime Soup Kitchen volunteer Shirley Porter prepare to serve people for the parish annual Thanksgiving Outreach Meal.*

zations that offer a Thanksgiving meal on that actual day, we offer a full Thanksgiving meal one week prior – this year, on Thursday, Nov. 17, from 11:30 a.m. until 1 p.m.

The parish established an Outreach fund for the purpose of providing money to meet expenses for the wide variety of programs included. That fund makes available some money to finance the soup kitchen, the food pantry and, thus, the Thanksgiving meal, but it is not sufficient to meet all the needs. It is only through the generosity and the

*continued on back cover*

## A MODERN MODEL OF SAINTHOOD ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA

In the dark final years of the Cold War, a small woman — standing at barely five feet tall — offered a living counternarrative to the inhibiting fear undergirding our daily lives and our foreign affairs. Instead of living in fear, Mother Teresa acted out of love. Instead of withdrawing and isolating herself, she gave tirelessly to others.

Many of us harbor a personal connection to this saint, for we lived during the height of the media coverage of Mother Teresa's work and her friendships with Pope St. John Paul II and the beloved Princess Diana.

Long before she received the name Mother Teresa and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born on Aug. 26, 1910, in Skopje, Macedonia, the crossroads of the Balkans. The youngest of three children, Mother Teresa was raised predominantly by her mother after her father's death, when she was about 8 years old. Dranafile (Drana) Bojaxhiu, Mother Teresa's mother, undoubtedly became a strong influence on her daughter's vocation, since Drana herself was a devout Catholic and known for her prayer life and her charity.

Agnes attended a Catholic primary school and, following the example of her mother, became active in their parish and sang in Sacred Heart's choir. As a young person, Agnes enjoyed reading the lives of the saints — while immersing herself in the stories of these holy men and women, Agnes first felt the stirring call to become a missionary.

At the age of 18, Agnes traveled to Dublin, Ireland, to join the Sisters of Loreto. She became Sr. Mary Teresa, named after St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and began to learn English. Within a few months of arriving in Ireland, she left for India.

In India, Sr. Mary Teresa lived at the Loreto Entally community in Calcutta, where she served as an educator and taught at St. Mary's School. After her final profession, she became Mother Teresa and, a



few years later, began serving as the school's principal.

On an ordinary day, Mother Teresa received an extraordinary call. While on a train ride to her annual retreat, Mother Teresa felt what she would describe as Jesus' thirst for souls. Soon, Jesus called her to found the Missionaries of Charity, an order devoted to serving the "poorest of the poor."

The order formally began on Oct. 7, 1950, and has grown from one woman tending the sick and dying in the streets of Calcutta to over 4,500 religious sisters helping the poor in over

130 countries around the world. Additionally, the order grew to include the Missionaries of Charity Brothers, the Missionaries of Charity Fathers and the Lay Missionaries of Charity.

Though externally Mother Teresa joyfully and indefatigably served the poor for nearly 50 years, during the majority of this time, she experienced a "dark night of the soul," an extensive period of not feeling God's presence or hearing His voice. Other saints, notably St. John of the Cross, similarly experienced a dark night of the soul. Despite this spiritual struggle, Mother Teresa continued her work joyfully throughout her sickness and until her death on Sept. 5, 1997.

Pope St. John Paul II beatified Mother Teresa in 2003. Fittingly, this year, a pontiff who has underscored the importance of social justice celebrated her canonization. On Sept. 4, 2016, Pope Francis canonized Mother Teresa, the "Saint of the Gutters," at the Vatican.

St. Teresa of Calcutta offers us an example of ceaseless prayer and selfless service. She is a modern model of sainthood that we can emulate in our daily lives starting with how we serve and treat the other members of our family, our faith community and all those with whom we interact on a daily basis.

*St. Teresa of Calcutta, Pray for Us!*

## A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

# GIVING THANKS TO GOD FOR THE GIFT OF TIME

Dear Parishioners,

The next several weeks are certainly a busy time for us as Catholics, good stewards, good citizens, and faithful members of the Church and our parish. There are celebrations and commemorations both inside and outside the Church that are momentous in terms of faith, citizenship, and living as people of thanksgiving and gratitude.

We celebrate Veterans Day to honor and thank all those men and women who served in the United States Armed Forces in one capacity or another. Indicative of the importance of this day, every year at 11 a.m. Eastern, the President of the United States lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

On Sunday, Nov. 20, we culminate the Jubilee Year of Mercy on the Feast of Christ the King. In this Jubilee Year, our Holy Father Pope Francis has invited us to love, be kind, be generous, and to forgive boundlessly. How have we done? We all understand this is what we are supposed to be doing every day and every year, but this year reminds us of that, and hopefully renews us all in that reality and that hope.



We all understand that Americans celebrate a day of Thanksgiving on Nov. 24. What more can we say about this? It is a day that was faith-based from its very beginnings, and it is an indication of how much we have to thank God for in terms of the gifts we have received — our lives, our families, our Church, our Lord and Savior — everything we are and everything we have.

No sooner are Thanksgiving Day celebrations concluded, than we begin that glorious season called Advent on Sunday, Nov. 27. This prepares us for and leads to Christmas. Indeed, this is both a busy and extraordinary time of year! There is, of course, much more on which we could focus and about which we could think, meditate and pray, but that is more than enough for us to consider and absorb.

From a stewardship perspective, I would like you to not only participate and focus on all the particular things that are about to happen, but also on one of our special gifts — the gift of time. The gift of time, which we all receive from God in equal amount, is precious because it is a non-renewable resource. Although some of our time is committed because of family responsibilities, work responsibilities or simply personal needs, we have an element of freewill with how we spend a certain amount of it. We need to spend some of that time in prayer, in thanksgiving, in worship, and in works of mercy and ministry. Our time is perhaps more precious than any material gifts we receive from the Lord. How are we doing with that gift?

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



## SPREAD Christmas Cheer THRO

Each Advent season, Spirit of Life parishioners look forward to helping local families through our parish's Angel Tree. Through this program, the parish is able to provide gifts for families who would otherwise have nothing to open on Christmas morning. By taking the time to grab a tag and purchase a gift, parishioners can spread a little extra Christmas cheer.

"For several years, we partnered with another community agency sponsoring the Care and Share Angel Tree – we were part of that program for almost 10 years," explains Mari Jo Sigl. "Because of the high volume of families we serve at Spirit of Life, we now do our own Angel Tree for these families."

"Last year, we gave out about 800 gifts to about 500 families!" adds Jackie Binstock.

Before the Angel Tree is set up in the church in mid-November, volunteers prepare tag ornaments for the tree that indicate an age, gender and gift suggestion that parishioners can purchase. Lucy Bauer – along with her husband, Tom, and children Caitlyn, 15; Matthew, 10; Timothy, 9; and Jenna, 6 – has been volunteering with this project for several years.

"We were here at the food pantry every week, so [helping out with the Angel Tree] just came naturally," Lucy says. "Together, we came up with a lot of gift ideas, and my kids love doing arts and crafts, so they enjoyed cutting out the tags. It became a family project, and we enjoyed doing it together."

"It's pretty fun," Caitlyn says. "You're cutting out ornaments for kids who don't have enough, who don't always get to do things that kids like us get to do. It makes me happy that we can make other kids feel special."

Parishioners can choose as many tags as they like, and bring the gifts to the parish by a set date in December. Gifts can either be wrapped or unwrapped – this way, the recipient can either specifically choose their gifts, or opt for a



*The members of the Bauer family have been v surprise on Christmas morning.*

"We provide the gifts to the people who use our food pantry, and who aren't receiving gifts from other agencies," Jackie says. "We give out the gifts for a week, as they come in to receive items from the food pantry. We give them a Christmas meal – ham, potatoes, veggies, stuffing – and let them come in and pick the gifts. I have a large group of volunteers that help out, and we have someone dress as Santa and others as elves. Some of the volunteers are musically inclined, so they sing Christmas music for them as they walk in the door. It makes it really feel like Christmas, and we couldn't do it without them!"

# UGH SPIRIT OF LIFE'S *Angel Tree*



*volunteering with this project for several years.*

In addition to gifts for children, Spirit of Life has recently begun to provide gifts for adults through the Angel Tree. This allows children to give gifts to their parents and grandparents.

“One time, a little kid came up to me and started crying, because he couldn’t give his mommy a gift and he didn’t even want one if he couldn’t give one,” Jackie says. “So he asked if

he could pick one that he thought she’d like, and he’d change the name on the tag at home. It just touched my heart, and we thought that this was something we could do in the future.”

“So now, we have tags on the tree for the adults as well,” Lucy says. “For example, we’ll write ‘a blanket for Grandma and Grandpa.’”

“When people come in and pick gifts, if there are children there, I now ask them if they want to come and pick one out for their mom, dad or grandparents,” Jackie says.

Through the Angel Tree, volunteers are also able to reap the benefits of giving.

“There’s nothing better than when those kids come in, and you hand them a Christmas basket full of food,” Jackie says. “They are so grateful for that, and for the gifts – even if they don’t necessarily want a gift for themselves, the opportunity to get a gift for someone else brightens their day. Many of our volunteers, when they come in and do this type of thing, end up thanking us more than we can thank them. It’s amazing how much they thank us for giving them that opportunity.”

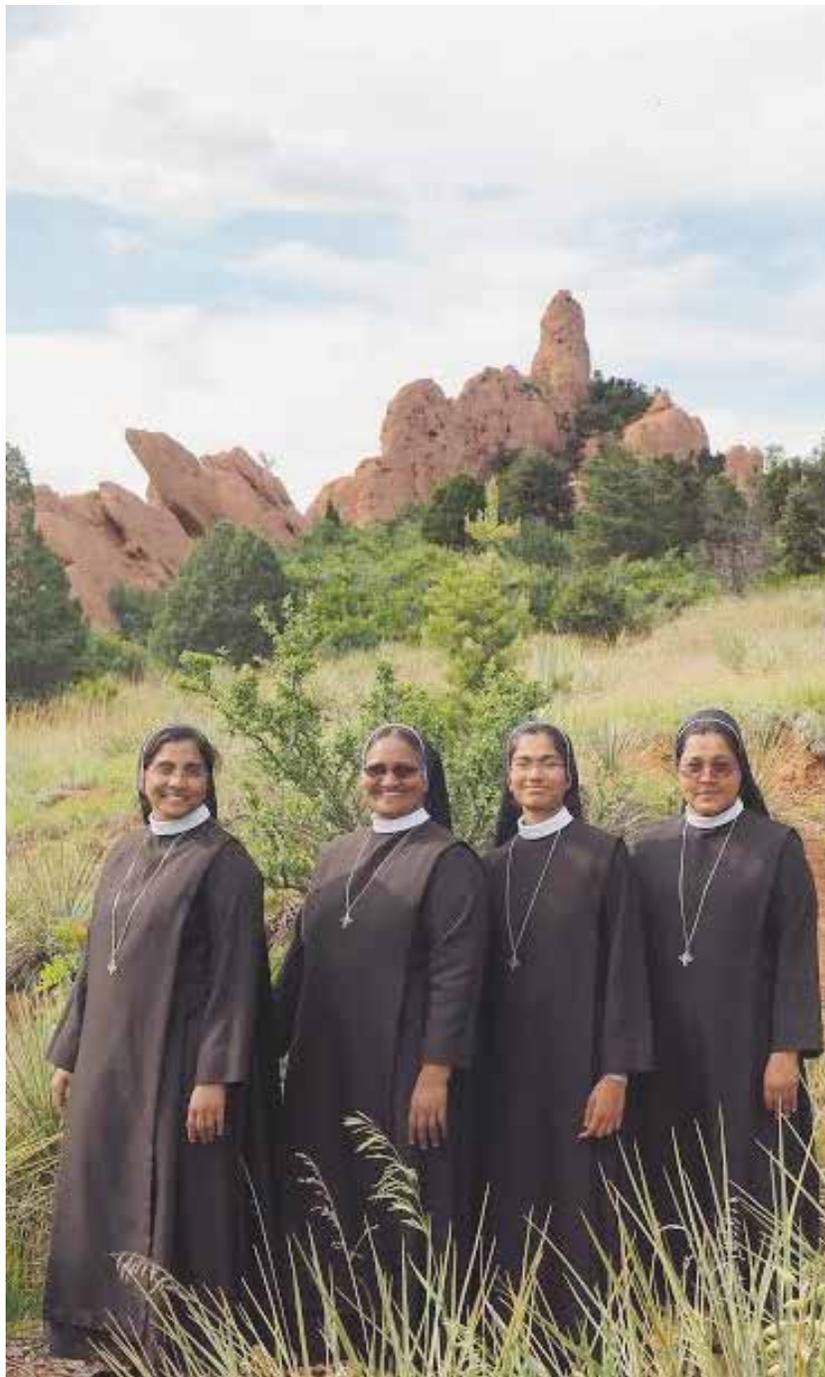
“For us, it’s way more than we could ever have asked for when we started volunteering here,” Lucy says. “We take a break in May, and my kids miss it all through the summertime. They really look forward to starting again in September! It’s such a blessing, and it’s truly a great gift.”

“It’s so awesome,” Caitlyn adds. “And I really think it’s drawn us closer together as a family.”

“Every day is a joy that we get to come in here and volunteer and be around these lovely people,” Mari Jo says.

*This year, the Angel Tree will be set up in the church’s gathering space on Saturday, Nov. 26. Gifts must be brought to the parish by Monday, Dec. 19. There is also an opportunity for parishioners to “adopt” a family at Christmas. For more information, please contact Mari Jo Sigl or Jackie Binstock at 701-663-1660.*

# GETTING TO KNOW



*Sr. Keerthana, Sr. Mary Michael, Sr. Jobitha (transferred to the Indian Mission), and Sr. Vandana*

By now, many of you have met Sr. Vandana, Sr. Mary Michael, and Sr. Keerthana from the Congregation of Teresan Carmelites. They have come a long way from their native India to be with us, and we are getting to know one another. Some of you may know, for example, that they love to dance the polka, that the Adoration Chapel is their favorite place to sit in quiet contemplation, that they live by the motto *Passion for Christ and Compassion for Humanity*, and that they have already discovered some favorite foods. Sr. Vandana likes pizza, Sr. Mary Michael likes tapioca pudding and fish, and Sr. Keerthana loves hash browns. But let's take a few moments to learn a little more about their discernment journey – a journey that would bring them here to North Dakota.

**Sr. Vandana** still has vivid memories of a special ritual her mother performed whenever they attended Mass or entered the Adoration Chapel to pray.

“When I was a little girl, my mother would first make the Sign of the Cross on me, and then on herself,” Sr. Vandana says. “This was the beginning of my learning about the faith.”

While her family was where she first learned about the faith, it was the Carmelite nuns who planted the seed for the religious life. When they invited her to a “come and see,” Sister spent four days with them and witnessed firsthand their spirituality and good works. Also, for the first time she truly understood John 12:24 and what Jesus meant when He said, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.” Then, inspired both by the Carmelite nuns and St. Teresa of Calcutta’s Missionaries of Charity, Sister turned to her father, whose advice on discerning God’s will still holds true to this day.

“If there is an inclination – if you think God is calling you – then you are being invited to His

# W THE SISTERS

fullness and joy,” he told her. “Go. Check it out.”

And she did. Sr. Vandana professed her vows with the Congregation of Teresan Carmelites where, in addition to the work she does, looks for any opportunity to pray with others.

“I love to pray,” Sr. Vandana says. “So if someone is willing, I am always ready to pray with them.”

**Sr. Mary Michael’s** vocation story is all the more amazing when you consider that she wasn’t even raised a Catholic. Her parents belonged to a Protestant church and, in fact, Sister comes from a long line of Protestants going back several generations. But due to a miracle, her entire family converted to Catholicism.

“My father lost his vision,” Sr. Mary Michael explains. “No one could help him. In his desperation, and without mentioning it to his family, he went to St. Michael Church to pray and his vision returned. From that miracle, we all came into the Church and were baptized – my father, my mother, and my brothers and sisters.”

They became very devout. Sister’s father read the Bible daily, and every evening at 7 p.m. the family gathered together to pray to the Sacred Heart and to Mother Mary, to have dinner, and to sit and talk. When Sister was in the sixth grade, she first mentioned to her parents about her desire to become a nun, and she continued to discern until she took her final vows in 1985.

“Think about all those who were called in the Bible,” Sr. Mary Michael says. “There was the call of Abraham and the prophets, the call of John the Baptist, the call of Matthew, and the call of Mary. So you see, God can call any one of us. Sometimes, the seed is planted through another person – sometimes, through prayer or Holy Scripture. But very often, as in my story, the seeds of a vocation begin in the home.”

In many ways, **Sr. Keerthana** became a nun because of her parents. Her father was a carpenter, but not just any carpenter. He was such a skilled craftsman that he worked in convents, monasteries and churches, and while he worked the sisters were curious and asked questions about his family. In the evening, he would come home

from work and speak of the sisters which, when added to the stories of St. Teresa of Calcutta’s missionary work, inspired Sr. Keerthana. And after hearing about the nuns from her father, it was Sr. Keerthana’s mother who gave her a proper religious education.

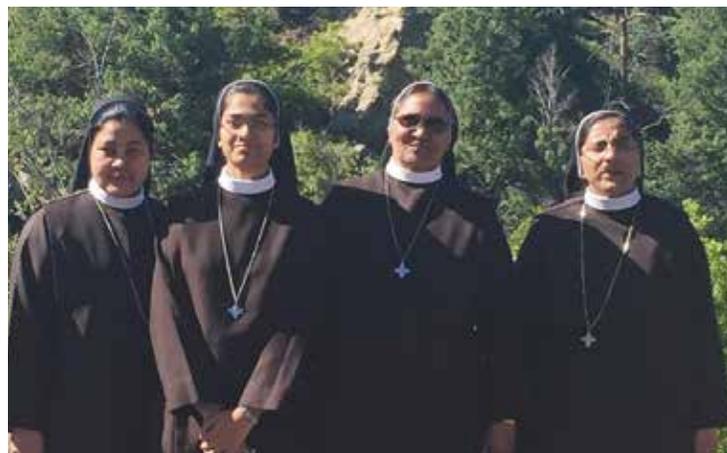
“My mother was very religious,” Sr. Keerthana says. “Every evening, she would gather us together and, after lighting some candles, we would sit in God’s presence and pray the Rosary. My mother was devoted to the Holy Mother, and later this inspired my vocation.”

When Sr. Keerthana was in the 10th grade, she received an invitation to visit the sisters, and instead of hearing stories of their service, this time she was able to witness as they went about their work. She was very inspired and began discerning a religious vocation. But it wasn’t easy.

“I had lots of struggles and weaknesses,” Sr. Keerthana says. “I struggled internally, I struggled intellectually, and I struggled spiritually. But through it all was God’s presence, and who I am today is because of God’s grace.”

Today, Sr. Keerthana speaks for all the sisters when she expresses her gratitude for the work they are able to do here. And even though they are far away from their native India, the welcome, love and support they have received has helped them find a home away from home.

“Here, we have many mothers,” Sr. Keerthana. “And we are very happy.”



*Sr. Vandana, Sr. Jobitha (transferred to the Indian Mission), Sr. Mary Michael, and Sr. Keerthana*

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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.

# OUR ANNUAL THANKSGIVING OUTREACH MEAL

*continued from front cover*

stewardship of our people that we are able to carry this out.

"This is something we do for people who may not be able to have a Thanksgiving like many of us are able to have," says Tom Stastny, who is the Team Leader of the Thanksgiving meal. "It is a special time for us stewards to reach out to those in need and to try to provide to them a sense of family and love, which is exactly what Christ has called us to do."

Last year, almost 370 people came for the Thanksgiving meal. Shirley Porter, another long-time volunteer in both the Soup Kitchen and the Thanksgiving event, notes how she is grateful for

the opportunity to serve in this way.

"I am blessed to enjoy cooking, which I do, and one of my great joys is sharing a meal with my family, along with the fellowship that results," Shirley says. "What a pleasure it is to see these people, many of whom come as families, sit around our tables, enjoy our home-cooked meal, and visit and laugh and have a good time. It gives me a great feeling to be involved in this."

Not only are we grateful to the ministry team members who serve, but we also need to thank the local community that is involved and especially our Spirit of Life parishioners who provide generous support and donations for this Thanksgiving meal.

*Anyone who wishes to contribute or be involved should contact the parish office at 701-663-1660. In addition to funding, we are in need of volunteers to prepare and serve the meal, as well as our regular Soup Kitchens throughout the year. Please note that we are also in need of turkeys and support for our Thanksgiving Basket Ministry, which is separate from the meal, but just as significant.*