

St. Leo's

PARISH COMMUNITY



SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT: *The Sacrament of Confirmation*

Different images come to mind when reflecting on the final Sacrament of Initiation. 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 a lot of thought. But regardless of what stands out in your mind, when you received the Sacrament of Confirmation, you were anointed with oil and sealed with the Holy Spirit, fully initiated into the Catholic Church.



Students celebrate receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation at St. Leo's in August 2019.

Each year, a group of candidates from St. Leo's joins the ranks of the fully initiated, receiving the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, in Confirmation. This year, the sacrament will be celebrated with those who recently completed their junior year of high school on Aug. 16 at 2 p.m.

“The first question I hear from young people about Confirmation is, ‘Why do I have to be confirmed?’” says Rita Hemmer, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. “During Confirmation preparation at St. Leo's, juniors are invited to explore, question, challenge, experience, and grow

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their faith and their relationship with Jesus.”

Prior to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, the youth spend time learning about their faith, as well as growing in their relationship with God and the Church. They meet regularly on Sunday evenings throughout the school year, focusing on various pillars of our faith through interactive and small-group activities. In addition to growing deeper in their understanding of the faith, the candidates also have the opportunity to build friendships with others who share their beliefs.

“Each session should be challenging and an experience of our Catholic faith,” Rita says. “It’s more than just information — our preparation program should draw us closer to Jesus through the Catholic faith. At the same time, our Confirmation candidates form a faith community amongst themselves. It really is a wonderful process and work of the Holy Spirit.”

Towards the completion of their preparation, the youth also participate in an overnight retreat.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “by the sacrament of Confirmation, (the baptized) are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (1285). Rita hopes that the preparation process will also empower our youth to live out their faith more fully as they receive the graces of the sacrament.

“Those who participate in the St. Leo’s



Candidates for Confirmation participate in an overnight retreat as part of their final preparation for the sacrament.

Confirmation preparation program very often say that they became closer to God and their faith increases,” Rita says. “This is a major and important step for our young people.

“Developmentally, as juniors in high school, they are able to come to a mature understanding and appreciation of their faith,” she adds. “This, in turn, helps them understand the necessity of the Holy Spirit in their lives. As they journey through the preparation process, I see a sincere yearning for closeness to God and an excitement to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.”

Rita invites parishioners to pray for our youth as they prepare to be confirmed, and to join us in celebrating the sacrament with our parish youth on Aug. 16.

“My continued hope and prayer for each candidate during this time is for open hearts and open minds so that the light of Christ can enter their hearts and transform their lives,” Rita says.

Youth who will be juniors for the 2020-21 school year will begin preparing for Confirmation 2021 with a candidate/parent orientation on Sunday, Sept. 13 at 7 p.m. Each family will receive an invitation letter and instructions for online registration, with a reminder postcard being sent to junior families in August. If you would like more information or if you have any questions, please contact Rita Hemmer at 308-382-4753 or rita@saintleos.org.

STEWARDSHIP: *A Positive Way to Live*

Dear Parishioners,

There is something about the month of August that is glorious. Summer is still in full force — the lazy, hazy days are upon us, and some still have vacations on the horizon. And, yet, we can also perceive how this wonderful season is drawing to a close — our vacations may already be over, and we may be anticipating the end of this relaxing time, with back-to-school and a return to the busyness of life just around the corner.

We are at that point in the year when things are coming to an end and things are beginning all at once. However, isn't that the way it always is? The Russian playwright and short-story writer Anton Chekhov once said, "People don't notice whether it is winter or summer when they are happy." There is certainly truth to that statement. You might say it is a stewardship statement.

I am sure you are wondering how to make the connection between Chekhov's quote and stewardship, but the connection is found quite simply in the word "happy." I once heard someone say in a presentation about stewardship that people who live stewardship as a way of life are almost always happy. There is a reason for that.

Stewardship is a positive way to live. It means feeling grateful and centering your thoughts on gratitude. In other words, your focus is on the good things in life, not the bad. That does not mean you have perfect health



or that all is ideal in your family, that you always sleep well at night, or that you enjoy everything that happens to you or around you.


However, it does mean that when the good happens, you thank God. You recognize that good and are filled with feelings of joy and gratitude. You and I know people like that, don't we? We know people who always seem filled with joy, regardless of what may be happening to them or around them personally. To me, these kinds of people are stewardship people —

the kind of people we all need to strive to be.

No doubt, you have heard that living a life of stewardship means living with an "attitude of gratitude." That is not easy, for you or for me. Let us vow to try to be like that nonetheless. As we prepare for the busier time of year to begin once again, let us concentrate on how God has blessed us. If we do that, I truly believe that we can be those people Chekhov described. If we are happy, it will not matter what time of year it is.

I am grateful for you, your support, your prayers, and — most of all — your presence in my life. Thank you and God bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Rev. Donald A. Buhrman
Pastor

ST. LEO'S SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM OFF



When St. Leo's parents sign their children up for any program here in the parish, they can do so with the knowledge that everyone involved with their children will have been screened and trained to make sure their children are safe at all times.

Rita Hemmer is parish coordinator for our Safe Environment Program. Her work is to ensure that all volunteers that have regular contact with children and youth have been trained to provide a safe environment.

"I also manage the Safe Environment records," Rita says. "Our goal is to be able to look every parent in the eye and tell them that we have done everything possible to provide an environment that is safe — physically, emotionally and spiritually."

The Safe Environment Program here at St. Leo's has been established through the guidance of the Diocese of Grand Island, all in accordance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People that was established by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002.

The Charter calls for every Safe Environment program in the diocese to prevent abuse within the Church. The mission of the diocesan program is to go even further — going beyond the prevention of church-related incidents of abuse, to promoting healthy and safe relationships across all individuals' lifespans. The diocesan mission is to help every individual experience the kind of loving relationships God intended for them.

"Safe Environment programs are required to include codes of conduct for individuals who interact with children, youth, and adults who are vulnerable," says Beth Heidt Kozisek, Director of the Child Protection Office in the diocese. "They provide a means for screening volunteers and staff who will serve vulnerable populations, and form training programs to help adults implement prevention strategies. There also is a framework to recognize signs of abuse and report abuse to appropriate authorities, and organize educational programs for children, youth and parents."

ERS ASSURANCE FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

The requirement to have a Safe Environment program at St. Leo's is an important one.

"To quote Pope Benedict XVI, 'Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction,'" Beth says. "Safe Environment programs are crucial to every parish, as they help to insure that when young people encounter adults in their parish, they are encountering Christ."

Since 2002 and the drafting of the bishops' Charter, the diocese has trained thousands of adults in recognizing signs of abuse, how to respond to disclosures of abuse, where to report abuse, and how to prevent it.

"Church has sent a clear message that there is nothing about abuse and exploitation that is Catholic — there is nothing Christ-like about it," Beth says. "The adults and youth in our parishes who have been educated in the signs of abuse versus right relationships have made a positive impact in their communities."

The positive offshoot of such training has been that those trained are expecting the same diligence against abuse in all programs serving vulnerable populations.

"Being part of Safe Environment programming has helped adults intervene on behalf of youth at risk in their communities and has assisted youth in seeking help for their peers," Beth says.

A further benefit of undergoing this training is that it can help form better stewards here at the parish.

"At the core of all abuse and exploitation is a failure to recognize the life and dignity of the

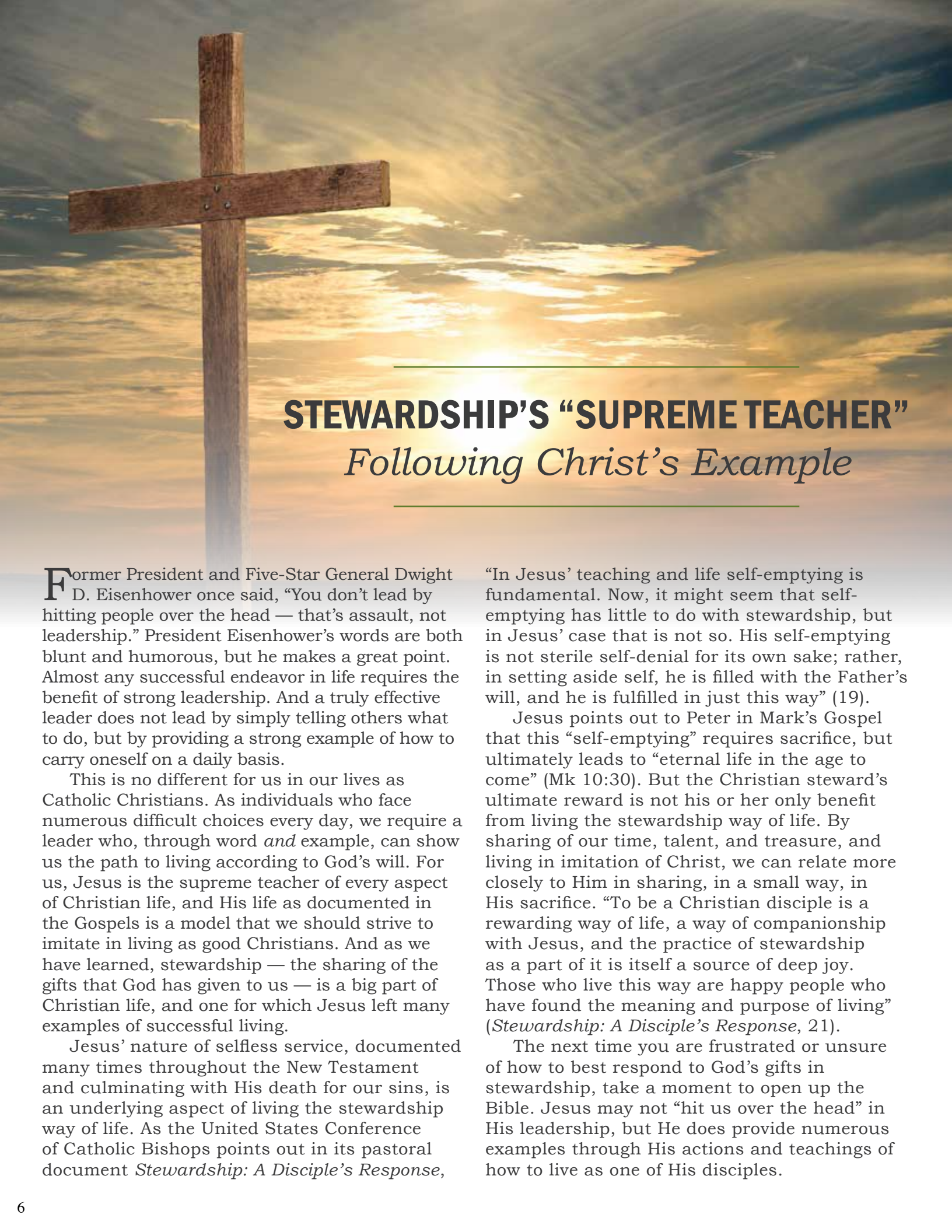
human person," Beth says. "Safe Environment programs help emphasize that every human person is a sacred gift and every relationship offers the potential for an encounter with Christ."

St. Leo's requires training in its Safe Environment program not only for those who volunteer only with youth, but also within the parish at large. However, training also takes in both youth and adults.

"We educate youth because we want to empower them to be free from harm and exploitation, and we want to set them on a path toward right relationships throughout their lives," Beth says. "We train adults because we believe that the burden of protection should not be placed on vulnerable youth or adults. We all have a responsibility to insure the safety and well-being of every individual. It takes all of us noticing signs of risk and modeling right relationships to truly make a difference."

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If you would like more information about training in St. Leo's Safe Environment program, please contact Rita Hemmer at 308-382-4753.



STEWARDSHIP'S "SUPREME TEACHER"

Following Christ's Example

Former President and Five-Star General Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "You don't lead by hitting people over the head — that's assault, not leadership." President Eisenhower's words are both blunt and humorous, but he makes a great point. Almost any successful endeavor in life requires the benefit of strong leadership. And a truly effective leader does not lead by simply telling others what to do, but by providing a strong example of how to carry oneself on a daily basis.

This is no different for us in our lives as Catholic Christians. As individuals who face numerous difficult choices every day, we require a leader who, through word *and* example, can show us the path to living according to God's will. For us, Jesus is the supreme teacher of every aspect of Christian life, and His life as documented in the Gospels is a model that we should strive to imitate in living as good Christians. And as we have learned, stewardship — the sharing of the gifts that God has given to us — is a big part of Christian life, and one for which Jesus left many examples of successful living.

Jesus' nature of selfless service, documented many times throughout the New Testament and culminating with His death for our sins, is an underlying aspect of living the stewardship way of life. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops points out in its pastoral document *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*,

"In Jesus' teaching and life self-emptying is fundamental. Now, it might seem that self-emptying has little to do with stewardship, but in Jesus' case that is not so. His self-emptying is not sterile self-denial for its own sake; rather, in setting aside self, he is filled with the Father's will, and he is fulfilled in just this way" (19).

Jesus points out to Peter in Mark's Gospel that this "self-emptying" requires sacrifice, but ultimately leads to "eternal life in the age to come" (Mk 10:30). But the Christian steward's ultimate reward is not his or her only benefit from living the stewardship way of life. By sharing of our time, talent, and treasure, and living in imitation of Christ, we can relate more closely to Him in sharing, in a small way, in His sacrifice. "To be a Christian disciple is a rewarding way of life, a way of companionship with Jesus, and the practice of stewardship as a part of it is itself a source of deep joy. Those who live this way are happy people who have found the meaning and purpose of living" (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 21).

The next time you are frustrated or unsure of how to best respond to God's gifts in stewardship, take a moment to open up the Bible. Jesus may not "hit us over the head" in His leadership, but He does provide numerous examples through His actions and teachings of how to live as one of His disciples.

SEWING STITCHES OF GOD'S LOVE AND PEACE WITH THE PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

When someone receives a prayer shawl, they can't help but feel embraced by the infinite mercy of their Heavenly Father.

"We get such wonderful feedback," says Elaine Janulewicz, who coordinates the Prayer Shawl Ministry along with Karen Denne. "People really appreciate the shawls we give, and they say they feel like they are getting a hug from God when they receive them, and each time they use them. They are very moved by us reaching out to them. The prayer shawls are 'love' they can touch!"

The Prayer Shawl Ministry meets on Thursdays at 1 p.m. in our parish gathering room. During their meetings, the ministry members enjoy each other's company as they work on their individual projects.

"Some of us knit, and some of us crochet," Elaine says. "We have a few different patterns that we use — the only requirement is that each person's project be a prayer shawl. It is a very social, laid-back group. We love to share fellowship with one another and support each other. We all look forward to coming to the meetings."

They also work on the shawls at home when they have time to do so. The shawls are used for many purposes.

"We make small ones for children of families in crisis, and white ones for Baptisms," Elaine says. "Some of them are used for lap blankets as well."

Ultimately, they are truly grateful they can use their talents for God's glory and take the

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SEWING STITCHES OF GOD'S LOVE AND PEACE WITH THE PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY *continued from page 7*

stewardship vision to heart.

“We pray for those who will receive the shawls, and this really makes what we do a lot more meaningful,” Elaine says. “It takes weeks just to make one shawl — it’s definitely not a quick process. It is really a labor of love!”

When the prayer shawls are finished, the members put them in bags along with a little card that says they are made by the Prayer Shawl Ministry. Next, they are brought to the parish office so that our parish priest can bless them. They are then distributed to those in need. At times, ministry members display them

on racks in the back of our parish as well.

“If we know of someone who needs special attention or care, we give them a prayer shawl,” Elaine says. “The Parish Nurse also brings them to people she is helping. Basically, we give them out to people who are in need of an ‘arm’ around them!”

As with all works of love, God’s peace abounds therein.

“It is not only comforting to those who receive the shawls, but it is also comforting for us who give them,” Elaine says. “It is a very rewarding ministry to be involved with.”

If you would like to learn more about this ministry, please contact Karen Denne at 308-391-1425 or Elaine Janulewicz at 308-381-1313, or refer the parish bulletin for more information.

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Daily Mass: 9 a.m., **Saturday:** 5 p.m., **Sunday:** 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Confession: Saturday 4 - 4:30 p.m. **Adoration:** First Friday of the Month, 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Abide Adoration: Fourth Sunday of the Month, 7 - 8 p.m.