

# St. Leo's

## PARISH COMMUNITY



## INCORPORATING DISCIPLESHIP INTO OUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

This is the time of year when we traditionally commit ourselves to new resolutions and goals. We make plans to do things like lose weight or develop a new exercise regime, all in the hopes of increasing our overall health and happiness. "Yet, sometimes in our New Year's zeal," says our pastor, Fr. Don Buhrman, "we're in danger of forgetting the most important aspects of life — namely, our relationship with Christ and our spiritual wellbeing."

"Most people plan on some sort of self-help resolution, hoping to increase their health and physical wellbeing, but sometimes we forget to come up with an intentional plan for our spiritual wellbeing," Fr. Don says. "We have those physical intentions, but I think what we might really be called to do is have a more intentional prayer life. The New Year presents us with an invitation to work more on the spiritual life, deepening our relationship with Jesus as disciples."

The goal of the parish, then, is to help facilitate this process by providing parishioners with additional opportunities to grow in love and service of the Lord, and to continually foster a spirit of stewardship so that we can become more faithful disciples together.

"Our hope is to encourage a more active, conscientious prayer life through participation in the sacraments and a regularly scheduled prayer



JANUARY 2019

*Inside*

- 2 The Eucharist and Stewardship as a Way of Life
- 3 New Year's Resolutions
- 4 St. Leo's Parish Council  
*Helping Our Pastor Fulfill the Parish Mission*
- 6 Mass Reverence and Etiquette
- 7 St. Leo's Health Ministry  
*Promoting the Care of Our Most Precious Gifts*

*continued on page 5*

## THE EUCHARIST AND STEWARDSHIP *as a Way of Life*

---

More than 20 years ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a pastoral letter titled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. This document was an invitation to follow Christ Who gave of Himself for us. Each of us is called to serve our neighbors and to be stewards of God's creation and of all that has been entrusted to us. However, to truly understand stewardship, we must look to the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is the total gift of our loving Savior to us. Stewardship is our response to that gift.

Even the word "Eucharist" implies stewardship. The word "Eucharist" finds its roots in the Latin word *eucharistia*, which in turn came from the Greek word *eukaristos*, which meant, quite simply, "gratitude" or "thanksgiving." How fitting that we, who are called to be a stewardship people, celebrate at the focal point of every Mass an act of thanksgiving and gratitude — namely, the reception of Jesus' gift to us — the Eucharist.

In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the bishops speak of the Eucharist in this way: "The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of this expansive communion of charity... we enjoy a unique union with Christ and, in Him, with one another. Here His love — indeed, His very Self — flows into us as disciples and, through us and our practice of stewardship to the entire human race."

When we receive Christ's Body in the Holy Eucharist, we hear the minister say, "The Body of Christ." To this, we respond, "Amen" — which means in Hebrew, "Yes; it is so." This is the essence of stewardship. We should enter the Church for Mass out of "gratitude." We recognize the presence of the Lord in Holy Communion, and then we truly receive the Lord. What is left for us to do is the fulfillment of stewardship — that is, sharing what we have received in love of God and neighbor. Our entire experience speaks to stewardship — we are grateful; we recognize the real presence of the Lord; we receive the Lord; and then we share what we have received.

Christ's gift to us through the Eucharist is an invitation to us. We are called to give beyond what is convenient or what may be comfortable. We are called to forgive even when forgiveness may not be deserved; we are called to love even when that love is not returned. We are called to love as God loves us.

The Eucharist is stewardship celebrated. The Mass is more than a ritual. It is an actual encounter with God, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We need to respond to the Eucharist with our complete selves. What we experience in the Eucharist should, in turn, translate into our daily lives. We are committed to the Church, which is Christ's body. We show our love for His body by acts of charity and generosity. We spend time in prayer, expressing our gratitude and our love.

God's greatest gift to us is Christ's great love for us — this was shown when He was crucified on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to give us eternal life. God's love for us is without limit, and He offers Himself to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Stewardship is how we respond to that gift.





## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

---



Dear Parishioners,

As we arrive at the New Year, it is customary that we make resolutions, which hopefully will be carried out during the course of the year. So many times these resolutions pertain to our physical lives — we resolve to exercise more, build a healthier diet, become more organized, etc. These resolutions may also involve the mental aspect of our lives — reading more, attending more cultural events, and so forth.

Too often we forget about the spiritual part of our lives. Our souls need to be tended to, and we need to make sure that we are deepening our relationship with God throughout the entire year.

I would like to give you a list of possible spiritual resolutions. While it might seem difficult for one person to undertake *all* of these, hopefully anyone can try several of these resolutions at one time or a number of them throughout the year.

- Attend Mass once a week over and above weekend liturgies.
- Spend an hour (or any amount of time) in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament once a week.
- Pray the *Liturgy of the Hours* (the *Divine Office*) at least once a day.
- Read and meditate on a chapter of Scripture each day.
- Take up a devotion of the Church (e.g. Rosary, Stations, novena, other prayers, etc.) and pray it daily.
- Read a spiritual book once a month.
- Make a morning offering as you begin your day, then an examination of conscience as you end your day.
- Offer a prayer of blessing/thanksgiving before/after a meal.
- Take time to pray daily with your spouse/family.
- As an individual or a family, take time once a week to do some form of charitable work — visiting those who are homebound or in a nursing home, do some work for an elderly friend or neighbor, bring food to someone in need, etc.

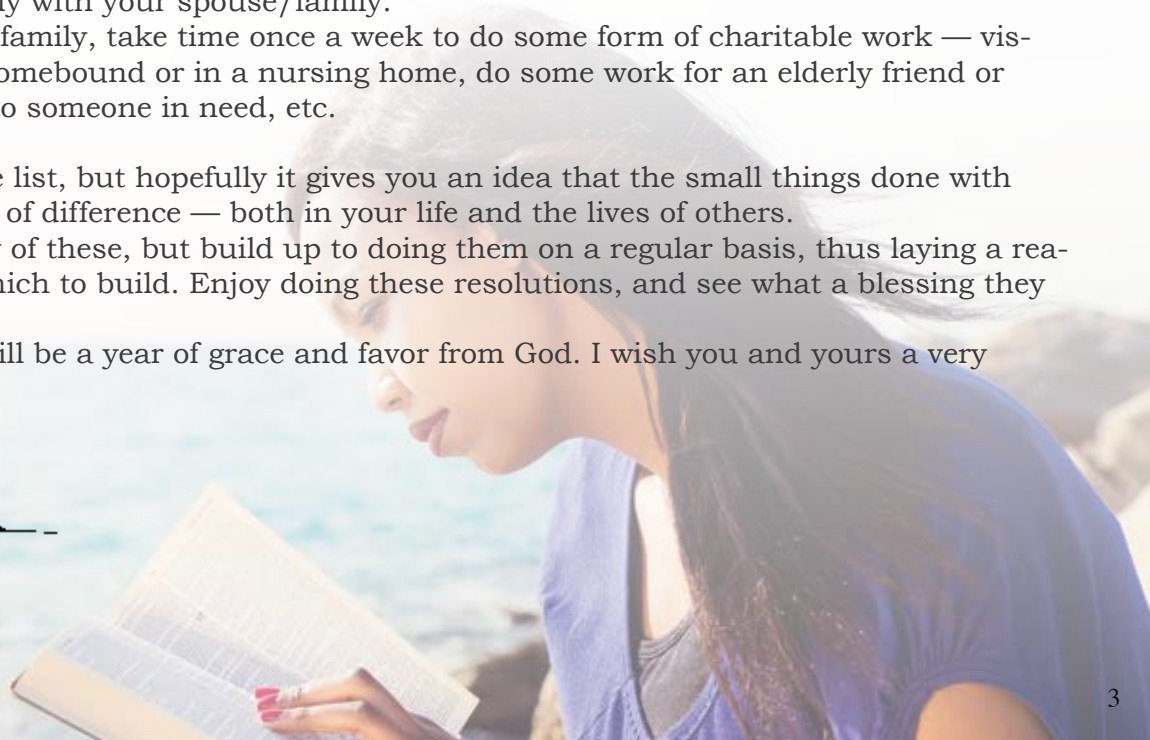
This is not an exhaustive list, but hopefully it gives you an idea that the small things done with great love can make a world of difference — both in your life and the lives of others.

Do not try to overdo any of these, but build up to doing them on a regular basis, thus laying a reasonable foundation upon which to build. Enjoy doing these resolutions, and see what a blessing they are for you and others.

Let us pray that 2019 will be a year of grace and favor from God. I wish you and yours a very happy New Year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Donald A. Buhrman  
Pastor



## ST. LEO'S PARISH COUNCIL *Helping Our*

Here at St. Leo's, we are blessed to have a pastor who is dedicated to helping parishioners grow closer to the Lord. Indeed, Fr. Don Buhrman does a wonderful job of nurturing our spiritual growth! With him, there are staff and volunteer parishioners working faithfully to help make the pastoral vision for St. Leo's a



reality. You may already know some of them — the parish office staff, our associate pastor, our deacon, and the directors of various ministries, to name just a few. Another invaluable group working behind the scenes to make our parish a wonderful place to call home is the St. Leo's Parish Council.

As Fr. Don explains, one of the main roles of the Parish Council is to maintain an understanding of parishioners' wants and needs, and to bring that information back to him to see how the parish might be able to respond.

"My perspective from the presider's chair is definitely different than the perspective from the pews, so the Council is there to help me fulfill the mission of the parish," he says. "I tell the Council members that they are my eyes and ears in the parish. Sometimes parishioners will say something to someone on the Council rather than to me, so hopefully they can then share with me what they're hearing and seeing."

In Fr. Don's experience,

the benefits of having a Parish Council to help guide the development of a parish are clear.

"It provides a collective wisdom, for one thing," he says. "If you're looking at a project, the more eyes that see it, the clearer the vision will be. The Parish Council is a source of counsel to the pastor in the management of the parish. The pastor is the one who is ultimately responsible and has to make the decisions, but the Council gives the pastor insight and reflections on how to proceed with activities or carry out procedures. It's there as a consultative body."

Nine parishioners serve on the Parish Council at a time, with three members rotating off each year. In lieu of electing new members, our parish uses a selection process guided by the Holy Spirit. Between February and May, parishioners may submit their names as candidates to replace that year's departing members. During a Mass in June, the candidates' names are placed in a basket, the congregation prays together, and three names are selected.

*"The Parish Council is a source of counsel to the pastor in the management of the parish. The pastor is the one who is ultimately responsible and has to make the decisions, but the Council gives the pastor insight and reflection on how to proceed with activities or carry out procedures. It's there as a consultative body." — Fr. Don Buhrman*



# Pastor Fulfill the Parish Mission

Meeting on the second Tuesday of each month, Parish Council members receive reports and discuss the current activities of our various parish ministries and programs, as well as our capital campaign.

Parishioners who serve on the Parish Council often learn that there is more going on in parish life than they had realized. Getting an “insider’s look” at parish activities and ministries — and working together to grow the parish — helps members further their own walk with Christ.

“We do try to keep (Parish Council business) in the

context of prayer and our relationship with the Lord as a community,” Fr. Don says. “My hope would be that serving with their time and talent in this capacity enhances the Council members’ awareness of how blessed they are and increases their desire to share that blessing with others.”

As Fr. Don looks to the future, he is excited by the opportunities that will continue to come to St. Leo’s as this dedicated group of parishioners works together with him to help make our parish a wonderful place to worship and grow in the faith!

Parishioners are asked to prayerfully consider a position on the Parish Council. If you feel you might be called to serve the parish in this way, keep an eye on our bulletin and listen for announcements over the next few months about how to submit your name! The next selection process for new members to the council will take place in June.

## INCORPORATING DISCIPLESHIP INTO OUR NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS *continued from front cover*

life,” Fr. Don says. “We will continue in the new year to offer not only religious education for our children, youth and young adults, but also opportunities for adult faith formation, especially during the Lenten season.”

Fr. Don believes that active involvement in parish life is good for our overall health. It creates a sense of belonging in parishioners as they are able to foster lifelong friendships. Then, too, there is the great joy that comes from giving of ourselves generously to others.

“Think about Christmas —

the kid is so happy opening his presents on Christmas morning, but the parents are also equally if not more happy to witness their child’s joy in receiving,” Fr. Don says. “Similarly, there is a special joy that comes from giving, different from when we’re the one receiving. And I think that becoming more of a steward — acknowledging what we’ve received and sharing those gifts with others — is truly a beautiful thing as we share in that joy together.”

So as we each spend time reflecting on the year gone by and thinking about our hope and

goals for 2019, it’s the perfect time to re-examine our stewardship giving and ask ourselves, “Lord, what is it you are calling me to do? How can I serve you better this year?”



## MASS REVERENCE AND ETIQUETTE

---

For many of us, when we are invited to a wedding, one of our first considerations is “what am I going to wear?” We wouldn’t think of showing up at a formal event in our workout clothes. How many of us search for just the right outfit to wear to our annual office party or on a date? Compare that to how much thought we put into what we wear to Mass on Sunday.

How we dress for an occasion indicates the importance that we place upon that particular celebration. At Mass, we encounter God through the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Dressing appropriately for Mass is one way that we show respect both for God and for our faith family. And this respect is important at all Masses – no matter what time of day or night.

Think about what you are teaching your children when you all wear your “Sunday clothes” to Mass. You are reminding them that Mass is a special celebration. After all, we are going to Jesus’ house.

Some people may quickly point out that Mass shouldn’t be a fashion show – a place to show off your finery – and they are right! We also know that some parishioners come to Mass on their way home from work, and they certainly should not feel embarrassed about arriving at Mass in their work clothes. And no one should ever stay away from Mass because of simplicity of clothing.

But one rule should apply in all instances – our attire at Mass should always be modest. Our clothing should never distract others from what we are gathered together to celebrate – the life, death and resurrection of our Lord.

The celebration of Mass is always a holy occasion and thus should be treated in the most holy manner – in body, mind and spirit.





# ST. LEO'S HEALTH MINISTRY

## *Promoting the Care of Our Most Precious Gifts*

---

Julie Gortemaker and her husband joined the parish when they moved to Grand Island in 2008. A few years later, Julie found a way to use her professional talents to serve the faith community as the parish nurse — an integral part of St. Leo's Health Ministry.

"I enjoy this opportunity to practice nursing with an extremely flexible schedule," Julie says. "I also really enjoy getting to know the members of this dynamic faith community."

St. Leo's Health Ministry offers tangible ways through which members of our faith community can care for others and live the Corporal Works of Mercy.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* repeatedly exhorts us to remember that all human life is sacred, and respecting the dignity of others includes a concern for their health, for "life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God" (2288).

"Our ministry follows parishioners throughout their lifespans and provides for their spiritual and health needs," Julie says.

There are several different ways to care for the health of members of our faith community, including those who might be struggling because of illness or injury.

"As the parish nurse, I visit parishioners who are in the hospital as well as those who are homebound," Julie says. "I also arrange meal

delivery for those who are unable to cook after a major health event."

These acts of concern for others positively impact many faith community members who are acutely ill or recovering from major surgeries or health events.

"It lets them know there is a caring community who wants them to return to their optimum health state," Julie says. "We also provide resources for those who are unable to provide for their own health needs."

One opportunity for faith community members to care for each other and further their own health knowledge exists through Golden Gems. This monthly program offers parishioners a luncheon and a speaker or activity on the second Tuesday of the month beginning at 11:30 a.m.

Participants are encouraged to bring a covered dish to share, and blood pressure screenings are available shortly before the program begins.

"Parishioners are always welcome to come to Golden Gems," Julie says. "It is a very welcoming environment that also involves health promotion

*continued on back cover*

*This New Year, let us prayerfully discern how we may serve as stewards of our own health and that of others — for as the Catechism of the Catholic Church emphasizes, "life and physical health are precious gifts."*



*Parish Nurse Julie Gortemaker taking Fr. Mark Maresh's blood pressure*



## ST. LEO'S HEALTH MINISTRY *continued from page 7*

through blood pressure monitoring.”

The Health Ministry also cares for the larger community of Grand Island, and Julie coordinates the twice-yearly blood drives that benefit our larger community — these take place in June and December each year.

There are many ways that parishioners can be involved in St. Leo's Health Ministry, from participating in the blood drives to bringing the Eucharist to homebound parishioners.

“Parishioners are always welcome to become Eucharistic Ministers to the homebound, which is an extremely fulfilling ministry,” Julie says.

This New Year, prayerfully discern how you can serve as a steward of your health and that of others, for “life and physical health are precious gifts.”

If you would like more information about St. Leo's Health Ministry, please reach out to Julie Gortemaker at 308-382-4753.



*Parishioner Bert Matousek with Eddie the comfort dog during Golden Gems*

---

## 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.