

St. Leo's

PARISH COMMUNITY



HOPE IN A TIME OF CRISIS

*Discovering New Ways to Share
and Become the Church*

One of the great gifts of Christianity is the belief that God brings good out of everything. This is something Fr. Don Buhrman says he's had many opportunities to witness over the past months during this unprecedented COVID-19 crisis.

"I tell people on a regular basis that if God can bring something good out of something as ugly and violent as the crucifixion, then He can bring something good out of any ugly, uncomfortable or difficult situation," Fr. Don says.

One of the first positives is that priests everywhere — Fr. Don included — have been finding new ways to connect with and minister to the people. From livestreamed Masses and devotional prayers to personal phone calls, it's pushed us all to reconsider what church means and how it takes shape in our individual lives.

"We're just trying to provide ministry to the people in whatever ways we can," Fr. Don says. "They can't come to the parish right now, so we've been trying to come to them through multimedia. The first Friday this all happened, for example, I did a Friday Chat with Father and have done this weekly ever since."

And though not without its challenges, another blessing born from



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STEWARDSHIP AND FAITH DURING TOUGH TIMES

These are uncertain and frightening times. At press time of this newsletter, we are unable to come together for Mass and the sacraments, and we're wondering, "How can we be a church when we can't come to our churches to celebrate Mass?"

During this and any crisis, one thing that remains constant is the Catholic Church and the unwavering support the Church offers. Throughout history, Catholics have sustained their communities in their homes during countless seasons of persecution or hardship, and living through a modern crisis is no different.

Now, more than ever, we must remember our parish truly is a community. The physical building in which we worship and pray is not the Church. We are the Church.

During a crisis, prayer is more important than ever. Though we may be isolated, through prayer we can embrace the unity of faith we all share as Catholics.

As faithful stewards, we must remember everything we have is a gift from God; and, in turn, we must be grateful and offer all that we do back to Him. We may be physically distanced from others, but we still have an opportunity to spiritually unite each day. A simple prayer such as the Morning Offering — a prayer said by an individual at the start of the day in order to consecrate oneself to Christ — is a great way to unite daily with Catholics around the world and claim our homes and our daily living for Christ. What's more, as we devote more time to personal and family prayer, remember to lift up in prayer all of our civil and religious leaders during this time, as well as our parishioners and community members.

There are other ways through which we can stay connected as a parish family. Call a friend from our parish community. Ask how they're doing, how they are living their faith during this time, and how they might need help. We can also keep in touch with each other and our pastor and parish leaders and staff online at our parish website at www.saintleos.org, and our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/saintleos.org/.

Stewardship, at its roots, also teaches that we are not supposed to give God our leftovers. We should instead strive to return to God a portion of our first fruits — giving to God first and then using the rest for our other needs. This idea can be worrisome for many, especially during a crisis. Taking the correct steps toward good stewardship in every aspect of our lives boils down to trust and believing that God, who takes care of all His creation, will take care of us.

Prayerfully consider continuing to give a portion of your treasure back to God and our parish by making your regular gift to the offertory if you are able to do so. You can give online at www.saintleos.org/contributions.html, or you can drop a check in the mail to the parish office. Our mailing address is:

St. Leo's Parish Community
2410 S. Blaine Street
Grand Island, NE 68801

There will come a day, soon, when we will worship together again. Remain hopeful and pray unceasingly. As we continue to navigate these uncertain times, remember there is hope. Our God is a great God, and He will not abandon us.

MORNING OFFERING

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer You my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, for the salvation of souls, the reparation of sins, the reunion of all Christians, and in particular for the intentions of the Holy Father this month. Amen.

THE *Light* AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Dear Parishioners,

As this unprecedented crisis continues to unfold, we are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel. As we begin to return to our “new normal,” we have so much for which to be grateful.

While our parish family has been apart, I have witnessed so many of you actively living out stewardship during these past few months, and that is truly a blessing. But with the uncertainty of what this “new normal” will be like in the coming days, weeks and months, I ask you to again consider how you are living out your call to stewardship.

Regardless of whether we can physically gather for Mass or come together for ministry activities and events, our faith lives on. Remember that stewardship is a way of life, meaning that we are called to live as intentional disciples of Christ through the practice of stewardship in all circumstances.

Have you been giving God your Time? I encourage you to pray every day and use this crisis as an opportunity to develop or strengthen your prayer life. How can you serve the Lord right now with your Talents? Serve your family and friends any way you can. Use your Talents wisely to grow in relationship with others near or far. And, is God still a priority in your Treasure? Despite the hardships, are you keeping Him at the heart of your financial decisions? I encourage you to give God a portion of your Treasure out of gratitude, no matter how big or small.

Part of being a parish community means we must stay connected at a time when we have been socially distanced. What better way to



connect than to discover new ways to share our Time, Talent, and Treasure with our parish family amidst this “new normal.”


Speaking of family, it is fitting that on the first Sunday of June we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. St. John Paul II described the Holy Trinity as a “Divine Family,” a community of Persons Who give themselves completely to each other and Who wishes to share Itself with us. These concepts are at the very heart of stewardship, as we, too, are called as stewards to share our lives with others.

A passage from the Gospel of St. John reminds us that stewardship is nothing more and nothing less than the imitation of our Most Holy Trinity. “God so loved the world that He gave his only Son so that everyone who believes might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16). God gave Himself, in the person of His Son, out of love for us. We must make our lives a loving gift to Him and others through the stewardship way of life.

In closing, thank you for your continued support by way of prayers, service and generous giving during these challenging times. I look forward to the day our parish is bustling with life again, and I pray that day is coming soon.

Remember, there is a light at the end of *every* tunnel — the Light of Christ.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Rev. Donald A. Buhrman
Pastor

FR. MARK MARESH REFLECTS ON THE C

For some people, it's a sudden lightbulb moment. For others, it might be a call met with reluctance. And still, in some cases, it's a slow and gradual work of discovering oneself and the plans God has in store. This is "vocation." In each of our lives, God calls and invites us to grow closer to Him on our journey towards heaven. For some, this vocation — or calling — takes the form of serving God and His people, the Church, as a priest.

Last year, our very own Fr. Mark Maresh celebrated 25 years of being ordained a priest. For him, there was no sudden revelation of his vocation, nor did he really fight God's whispers. Rather, it was a process of coming to know God's love and being drawn into a life that has brought him peace, joy and fulfillment.

Born and raised in a Catholic household, Fr. Mark grew up attending Mass with his family, going to Catholic grade school and watching his parents actively participate in parish life. He became involved as an altar server in second grade and continued to serve through college.

"I can go back to when I was in seventh or eighth grade and I was an altar boy at St. Mary's Catholic Grade School," Fr. Mark says. "I'd just gotten done with weekday Mass and was walking from the church to the school and a lady came up to me and said, 'Someday, you'll make a fine priest.' I chuckled about it at the time, and didn't think too much about it."

Beginning his post-high school education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Fr. Mark found himself studying Agricultural Economics — and realizing that was not where he was meant to be. After becoming involved in the Newman Center at his university and meeting a group of seminarians, he decided to discern the priesthood. Not long afterwards, he joined the seminary. After spending eight years in seminary — both at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, as well as St.



Fr. Mark Maresh loves being able to serve the Church as a priest.

Thomas Seminary in Denver —
Fr. Mark was ordained a Catholic priest.

"I wouldn't say there was a defining moment in my life when I *knew*," Fr. Mark says. "It was just gradually growing more in my faith life and feeling more and more called to become a priest. It was a big step to take, but I knew that if it's what God was calling me to, He'd help me through it, too."

Over the years, Fr. Mark has served at over a dozen parishes and missions in the Grand Island diocese. His favorite parts of ministry are sharing the sacraments with those he serves, especially the sick and elderly.

"My favorite thing about being a priest is being with the people at unique moments in their lives, at special moments in their lives," Fr. Mark says. "I feel like I have a special calling to nursing home Masses — I can tell how much it means to people, that they're not forgotten in their older ages, and they're still a part of our faith community."

Fr. Mark has found that his call to ministry as a priest has strengthened his own faith, as he's journeyed alongside others and witnessed

CALL AND JOURNEY TO THE PRIESTHOOD

their devotion.

“The faith of the people is amazing to me — in particular, in Confession, as well as the sacraments in general,” he says. “To see in people’s faces, the faith they have with the sacraments, it’s amazing.”

“It’s very humbling and very rewarding,” says Fr. Mark. “The hardest part of priesthood, in my opinion, is the transfers to new parishes. Starting July 1, I will be transferred to Loup City, Neb. I will truly miss St. Leo’s and all of its members immensely. I have loved St. Leo’s and all of its members. I will keep all of you

in my prayers. Please pray for me in my new assignment. God bless all of you,” he adds.

Fr. Mark encourages young people to be open to where God might be calling them, reminding them that God desires to lead us to the life in which we will be most fulfilled.

“For me, it’s been a very rewarding and fulfilling life,” Fr. Mark says. “I encourage men to consider it as an option.”

“Start with your prayer life,” he adds. “Go to daily Mass if possible, to have that connection with Jesus in the Eucharist. Pray to know God’s will and for the grace to follow that will.”

If you are considering whether God may be inviting you to consider a vocation to the priesthood, and would like to talk with someone, please call Fr. Mark Maresh at 308-382-4753.

HOPE IN A TIME OF CRISIS *continued from front cover*

the crisis has been the emphasis placed upon the domestic church. Deprived of their normal routines, families and individuals have had to get creative in ways to keep the Sabbath holy from the confines of their homes. This has led parishioners to embrace online resources like FORMED.org, perhaps taking an overall greater responsibility for their own faith formation.

“My hope is that more families are eating and spending time together as a family, becoming more fully that domestic church — doing things like praying together, reading some Scripture, or saying a Rosary or Divine Mercy Chaplet,” Fr. Don says. “Before this all happened, we were already encouraging people to take responsibility of their own spirituality. I hope people are taking advantage of that and that they continue using these resources even after we can return to the church, taking a real responsibility for their continued education and formation.”

Fr. Don says it’s been beautiful, too, to see the Church come together in new ways. Many have expressed a deeper appreciation for the Mass and sacraments — a holy hunger to receive Christ in the Eucharist once again. Others have taken a great leap of faith, continuing to tithe and live out stewardship despite great uncertainty.

“The people have been so generous, living that stewardship lifestyle despite everything,” Fr. Don says. “They are mailing in or dropping off their contributions and we’ve seen more people sign up for direct deposit.”

Though current times have required a bit more creativity in terms of ministry, the pandemic continues to reveal how truly alive the Church is. As we move forward, Fr. Don’s prayer is that we can continue to grow from this experience, finding new ways to communicate, evangelize and flourish in our faith.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWING IN FAITH ABOUND THROUGH THE *Lending Library*

The more we know about the Catholic faith, the better we can understand it. There are so many topics one can study, from the saints and the Church's history to the many traditions. And with the long history of the Catholic Church, there are innumerable resources from which we can draw valuable knowledge and perspective.

Some of these resources can be accessed at our parish's own Lending Library, through which there are numerous books, CDs and videos all available to borrow.

Not to be overlooked are the books and CDs offered via the Lighthouse Catholic Media kiosk in the Gather area. These resources are available with a reasonable suggested donation and vary on topic, from resources for teens and the family, to insights and information about confession.

Also, St. Leo's has a subscription to FORMED.org and the myParish app, both of which offer many resources on all facets of the Catholic faith for all ages. These are free to parishioners.

"If you need information on a topic, you can find it," says Donna Douglass of our parish office staff. "If you are going through an experience, we may have something to help — such as, if you have a loved one who is dying. We have some great books for you to read. If you want to broaden your knowledge of your faith or improve your prayer life, we have the resources for you."

According to Donna, the Lending Library has been around for at least 17 years. All that is asked is items are returned after use. Donna says the library wouldn't be available without the good work of Beatta Nabity and Madelene Rose, who sorted many of the library materials. Donna also offers thanks to Deacon Bill for his work overseeing the Lighthouse Catholic Media kiosk.



The Lending Library has been around for at least 17 years. All that is asked is items are returned after use!

Check out the Lending Library to learn more about our rich faith. In addition, you can learn more about the myParish or FORMED.org apps by visiting www.stleos.org.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE (M.A.D.) CAMP

A Great Summer Service Opportunity for Parish Youth

For many teenagers, summertime means sleeping in, hanging out with friends and probably even more time connected to a screen than during the school year. But for many of our young people here at St. Leo's, summer is also a time to give back to our parish and community through service.

Nearly 20 years ago, Make a Difference Camp, or M.A.D. Camp, began as a summer day camp. Today, it has expanded to a three-day, overnight service retreat that is open to incoming seventh through ninth-grade youth. This summer, the experience takes place July 19-21.

"Youth will experience what it means to be called to serve those in need," says Rita Hemmer, who coordinates our parish Youth and Young Adult Ministry. "We lend a helping hand at several community service agencies and have tons of fun doing it."

During the day, the young people are divided into teams who go out to serve at different

community organizations such as the Humane Society, the Crisis Center, Orphan Grain Train, and others. When not out in the community, the teams return to St. Leo's, where they participate in fun and interactive activities, designed to help them understand our call to service as Christians.

For many young people, getting out of the routine of everyday life — especially during the summer — can be an opportunity to grow and experience their relationship with God in new and deeper ways.

"Catholic retreats, such as M.A.D. Camp, go one step further in an experience of God and a faith community," Rita says. "Retreats allow the participant to step out of everyday life and focus on their relationship with the faith community and on God."

"We infuse activities and prayer experiences that help relate to God," she adds. "M.A.D. Camp helps young people understand that they are a wonderful creation of God, that they have a purpose in this world, and that they are loved so much."

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MAKE A DIFFERENCE (M.A.D.) CAMP *continued from page 7*

In addition, spending an extended time with other faithful peers, high school mentors, and adults helps our young people to become more connected with our parish family.

“What makes M.A.D. Camp special is the faith community that forms from spending three days together, praying, playing and working together,” Rita says.

It is Rita’s hope that experiences such as M.A.D. Camp empower our youth to live out their faith in daily life, looking for ways to be the hands and feet of Christ to all they meet, through service.

“[M.A.D. Camp] helps young people understand that they can make a difference

in their world,” Rita says. “Participants learn that they have incredible power to either make or break someone’s day and that, as children of God, we are called to make someone’s day, every day.”

Rita encourages our youth to consider becoming involved in service with other young Catholics this summer.

“The name of this camp explains what will happen,” Rita says. “Each young person will see that all their choices can Make A Difference in this world. Youth are encouraged to come find out how, have tons of fun doing it, and create incredible friendships.”

If you would like more information on M.A.D. Camp or to register, please visit our website at www.saintleos.org/mad-camp.html. The cost for registration is \$25 per person.

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.