

# St. Leo's

## PARISH COMMUNITY



### READY TO RESPOND

#### *Parishioners and Community Members Help When Disaster Strikes*

We know that natural and man-made disasters can strike at any time — and how we choose to respond can make all the difference. And here at St. Leo's, the informal Disaster Relief Ministry is ready to react when a need arises.

“As Catholics, it is our job to step up when our brothers and sisters are in need,” says St. Leo's Outreach Coordinator Donna Douglass. “The other side of it is you could be in need someday. No one plans for that — it just happens.”

Whether it's the fires in Valentine several years ago, tornadoes in Joplin or the flooding this spring in our own backyard, parishioners and the Grand Island community have stepped up to help.

Most of the information on what is needed comes from Chef Anthony at the Grand Island Hy-Vee. Chef Anthony does a lot of work with local veterans and homeless veterans and also knows about what is needed following a local or regional disaster. The need could be box lunches, or in the case of the Nebraska floods, bottled water, cleaning supplies, blankets — the list goes on.



*Parishioners helped prepare bag lunches when flooding was affecting our region this spring.*

NOVEMBER 2019

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## Stewardship

# LIVING IN LOVE

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“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him” (1 Jn 4:16). As Christ’s disciples, we are called to live lives of love. When asked which commandment is the most important, Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” He immediately followed this command with, “Love your neighbor as yourself. No commandment is greater than these” (Mk 12:29-31).

The life of a Christian is, essentially, all about love! This doesn’t mean that Christ preached an abstract Gospel, or that we need to love simply because “it feels good.” The reality is quite the opposite. Indeed, Christ’s Gospel of love is one of dramatic action, and living in that love calls each of us to action.

What is this love, then, of which Christ speaks? How are we to live it out today?

Christ, the God who, as John tells us, “is love” Himself, came to Earth out of pure love for us. So that we might have everlasting life, Christ took the punishment for our sins. He, the Lord of all creation, was mocked, scourged and ultimately murdered on the cross to atone for the sins that we, His creatures, have committed. Now, that’s love! And it is the love that we are called to imitate throughout our lives.

Notice the selfless nature of Jesus’ act. He gained nothing in return for what He did, and He calls us to love in the same manner. How do we do that here and now? Do we die on our own personal crosses? The answer, in a way, is “yes.” We don’t necessarily die on the wood of the literal cross as Christ did,

but we must die to self for the sake of others. That is the love of Christ, and that is the love He calls us to every day. If we want to truly love God, we must love others. God Himself showed us the reality of this need when he commanded that we love our neighbor just as we love Him. And then Christ explained, “Whatever you do to the least of those, you do to me.” If we are called to love God, then we are called to love our neighbor, for Christ resides in each one of us. It must be a love like Christ has shown us – one of selflessness. We should want for nothing more than the good of our neighbor.

There are many ways that we can show our love to others, particularly through prayer and service. Here at our parish, there are many ministries that offer us the opportunity to serve our neighbors. If we offer a little bit of time, we can help out in the parish office doing seemingly menial yet important tasks, such as stuffing inserts into the bulletins so that fellow parishioners are aware of news and events within the parish. Those of us with an aptitude for teaching may be called to serve others through RCIA or our Religious Education program. There is also always a need for more Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers to aid the priest in bringing Christ to other parishioners at Mass.

These are but a few of the countless opportunities we have to serve our parish and local community. However we are called to do so, one thing is for certain: the love of Christ calls us to action. How will we show our love for God this year? Remember, “Whatever you do for the least of those, you do for me.”



*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## STEWARDSHIP ON WHOSE TERMS?

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Dear Parishioners,

When it comes to stewardship, it seems the acceptance or rejection of it is a personal choice, and it is often based on our knowledge of it, no matter how limited that may be.

More often than not, it isn't easy to accept something — even in the way of faith — if we are not comfortable with it. It's too easy to reject something that will challenge us to think "outside the box." And while that may be enticing, most of us don't like to go beyond our comfort zones. Too many are still thinking stewardship as a way of life is "outside the box."

But I would wager that happens because we want things on our terms only. Stewardship only on our terms often lacks something. It is a different story when stewardship is on the Lord's terms. Stewardship on His terms leads to a life of holiness — a life we identify as discipleship.

When I practice stewardship on my own terms, I may get only part of what the Lord wants me to do. When I practice stewardship on the Lord's terms, I am more faithful to His call to be the disciple He expects me to be. However, it isn't always the most comfortable or easiest road to travel. I am often pushed beyond my comfort zone and challenged to trust that the Lord's ways are truer than my own. I would venture to say it is human nature to take the easy way out and stay with what we are comfortable doing. I am convinced that authentic discipleship is always intended to be lived on the Lord's terms. Stewardship must be done so, as well.




If you have ever read any spiritual books, perhaps about the lives of the saints or general stories about our faith from gifted Catholic authors, you may find they all have one thing in common — they all seem to agree that whatever happens to us, whatever we try to do, it must always be on the Lord's terms. Who are we to argue? When we try to live life on our own "terms," don't we always seem to come up a little bit short?

"Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts" is a familiar quote from the apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians that

goes on to describe in great detail the Lord's terms for holiness. Shouldn't these terms be the same for the stewardship way of life? Our call to discipleship and holiness is based on those terms, not always only on ours.

"Stewardship on whose terms" will always challenge us to look to the Lord for the terms He has laid out for us. Understanding and accepting them is essential to be His disciple. That has always been very clear in the Gospels. When our terms become the Lord's terms, then becoming the faithful stewards we are called to be is inevitable — and in the end, isn't that just the way Jesus would want it?

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
Rev. Donald A. Buhrman  
Pastor

## LEARNING *Young Neighbors in Action*

As the chill of winter draws close, the warm summer months may seem far off. But for a group of students from St. Leo's, the countdown to those sunny days has already begun.

For over two decades, St. Leo's has given our high school students the opportunity to participate in a week-long service trip through Young Neighbors in Action, or YNIA — a Catholic summer service opportunity sponsored by the Center for Ministry Development. Next summer, St. Leo's will be serving in Detroit from June 20-27.

"Our Young Neighbors sacrifice a week of their summers to experience this community and service," says our Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Rita Hemmer. "It really does take them out of their comfort zones so that we can focus on each other, our faith and those we serve."

Fundraising for the trip begins nine months before the students, or Young Neighbors, set out on their adventure. Through events like Cinnamon Roll Sundays, or St. Leo's Craft Fair and Soup Sale — Dec. 14 and 15 — our youth raise the funds necessary for registrations and travel expenses.

Some may question the value of traveling to another location to serve those in need, rather than simply caring for those in our own backyard. According to Rita, the experience of serving in a new location is designed to empower students to use the skills they acquire to give back to their own community.

"The YNIA program empowers our young people to dive deeper into our Catholic faith to experience what service is, why we serve, and how to take this back into our own communities," Rita says. "One of the purposes of the YNIA program is to help young people discover the gifts they have, and empower them to use those gifts to serve their community back home."



*Each summer, youth from our parish participate in a week of service through Young Neighbors in Action.*

The focus of the week is helping young people to understand the significance of Catholic social justice, as well as giving them opportunities to put their faith in action. The teams serve in a variety of different ways, from providing food for those in need, to serving those with mental illness, to various other tasks, such as cleaning up a school.

The youth also spend time building community with one another and growing in their relationship with God through prayer and liturgy.

"That is one of the great things about this program — young people are removed from their surroundings and comforts of home to join a community with a common goal," Rita says. "Many of our youth gain strong faithful friendships not only within our own St. Leo's team, but also with the youth from other teams."

One of the most powerful things about the week is getting to witness the service of the local community members in the locations that YNIA visits. Many of the community

# TO SERVE:

## Action — Detroit 2020

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partners with whom the students interact have dedicated their lives to serving and bettering their local communities. Students are also impacted by the people they serve.

“Our Young Neighbors are inspired by the dedication, compassion and faith that these people display,” Rita says. “I believe that the young people are also inspired by the people they serve. It is through these people that our Young Neighbors see hope, joy and gratitude. When a Young Neighbor experiences

someone that is in such need, but can still be positive and be grateful, it impacts the lives and attitudes of our Young Neighbors.”

Rita encourages young people to consider this opportunity to serve others in need this coming summer.

“The focus of the week is serving our neighbors, just as Jesus taught,” Rita says. “If you join this team, you will have fun, you will work hard, you will make a difference and you will gain lifelong friends.”

If you would like more information on Young Neighbors in Action, you can visit their website at [www.cmdnet.org/about-ynia-program](http://www.cmdnet.org/about-ynia-program). You can find the summer 2020 application both on our website at [www.saintleos.org/ynia-info.html](http://www.saintleos.org/ynia-info.html), as well as pick one up at the Youth Bulletin Board in the gathering area. If you have questions or would like to make a donation to support our youth on this trip, please contact Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry Rita Hemmer at [rita@saintleos.org](mailto:rita@saintleos.org).

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## READY TO RESPOND *continued from front cover*

“Our parishioners and community members are so good at helping out,” Donna says.

In the case of the floods, Donna found out about a day in advance that dinner was needed the following night.

“I went to the store and bought what we needed,” she says. “Parishioners showed up to make sandwiches and others donated toward the supplies.”

Donna acknowledges that people want to help, but often aren’t sure of the best way to do so. The Disaster Relief Ministry spreads the word on the need, often through Facebook, the myParish App and the bulletin. Since the need is often immediate, myParish App and Facebook are the

best way to learn how to help.

“Often, the need is so overwhelming,” Donna says. “People say ‘I can do this, I can help with this.’”

The Disaster Response also includes taking up special collections for those in the U.S. and other countries, when the bishop requests it. This money is donated to Catholic Relief Services. St. Leo’s is also an American Red Cross emergency shelter, and is set up that way if there is ever a need.

“Caring for our brothers and sisters is our responsibility,” Donna says. “In times of need, our responsibility is greater. Whenever we need people to step up, they do.”

Please be sure to follow St. Leo’s Facebook, the myParish App and the bulletin to find out when a collection is being done for those affected by disaster.

## THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: *Returning to the Father*

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Those of us who have children know what it's like when they come to us apologetically after having done something they know is wrong. As parents, it melts our hearts, and we can't help but forgive them freely, and take them into our arms – sometimes squeezing them with tears in our eyes! At times, we may even feel closer to them than we did before the event occurred.

This, we can assume, is how God feels, being our most clement Father. In His magnanimous love, He sent His only Son Jesus Christ to redeem the world, freeing it from the haunting grips of sin and death. Christ instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation through His Church to offer sinners forgiveness for the offenses they committed against God.

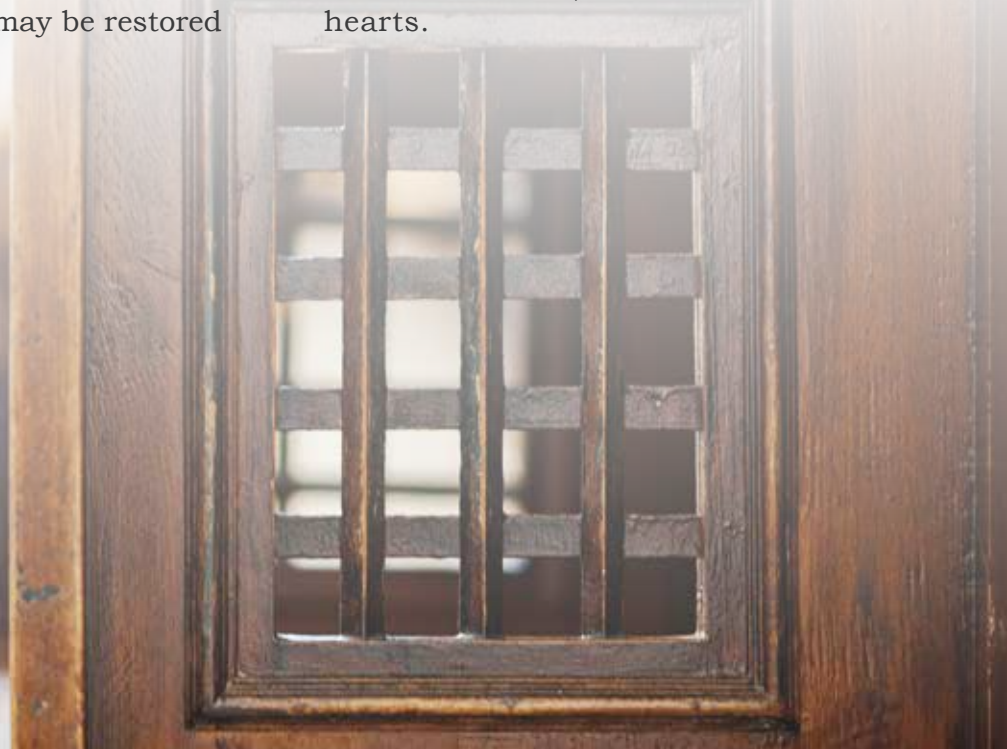
As the Angelic Doctor St. Thomas Aquinas writes so beautifully, “[The Sacrament of Confession is a] sacrament of healing and a sacrament of conversion, returning us to the Father after we have sinned. In the life of the body a man is sometimes sick, and unless he takes medicine, he will die. Even so in the spiritual life a man is sick on account of sin. For that reason he needs medicine so that he may be restored

to health; and this grace is bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance.”

As far as the details for the reception of this sacrament are concerned, three conditions are necessary – contrition, which is genuine sorrow for sin, together with a purpose of amendment; confession of sins without any omission; and satisfaction by means of good works. A priest is gravely bound to keeping total confidentiality for all confessions they hear.

Church law requires Catholics to confess mortal sins – the most serious kind of sins – to a priest at least once per year, and to confess them before ever receiving Holy Communion, as well. However, this is by far the minimum; Catholics are encouraged to receive the sacrament freely and frequently since it is so extremely beneficial to the health of the mind, soul and spiritual life in general.

To honor the Sacraments is to honor God and the entire Christian community. To receive the Sacraments is to live in God's love and to strengthen our love for each other. Christ, our tenderhearted, Paschal Lamb, awaits us, His beloved children, to come to Him with all of our hearts.



## *Roll Up Your Sleeve and Make a Difference for Someone:* **THE DECEMBER BLOOD DRIVE**

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There is a gift you can give someone in our community that doesn't cost you a thing, yet could mean life itself to that person. All you have to do is sign up to be a blood donor during St. Leo's December blood drive, set for the week between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Julie Gortemaker, parish nurse, coordinates the Blood Drive Ministry that works in conjunction with the local chapter of the American Red Cross. While there is no real need for extra hands to set everything up in our social hall for the drive, there is a need for willing volunteers to roll up their sleeves and donate.

"We have had people with family members who received blood, who return to donate," Julie says. "It has impacted their lives."

Although she is not directly aware of parishioners receiving blood, she knows there are parishioners with medical conditions who would require blood transfusions on a regular basis.

"We do have a lady in the parish whose small size means she cannot give blood," Julie says. "Her husband is able to give, but she's never been able to do it. But she makes us cookies for each blood drive. That is her contribution. People look forward to her cookies, so it's nice how she contributes to the drive."

It is a busy time at Christmas with visits with family and friends, but the need for blood is always there in our community, and is especially critical when our drives are held, in December and June. The December drive is convenient for our college students, while they are home during their winter break. All types of blood are needed.

"Giving blood is a way to do community outreach," Julie says. "It is a way for the parish to impact our local community. There is always a need for blood, and especially in the winter because people can't always get out to give. Our Christmas blood drive is essential because it helps to replenish our local supplies. This is a



time of critical need. It doesn't cost to give, and it's such a gift for those who need it."

The whole process of giving usually takes no more than 45 minutes to an hour. Pre-registration is required, and prospective donors can sign up in several ways — online on the Grand Island Red Cross website; in person at the parish office; or by calling Julie at the parish office.

Persons between the ages of 16 to 19 will require parental permission to give.

When donors report to the drive, they will be asked to give their health history, and if they have ever donated blood, or if it has been at least 56 days since they last donated. They also will be asked questions about their travel history and medications they are taking. A Red Cross staffer will take a small blood sample from a finger prick for testing to determine if the donor can give at that time.

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## THE DECEMBER BLOOD DRIVE *continued from page 7*

When the process is complete, you will know that you have made an impact on someone's life in our community. And not only that, those who donate in December will receive a long-sleeve T-shirt — an incentive that does attract donors.

“We've had several first-time donors in the past, and that is really exciting,” Julie says. “Fr. Don gave for the first time at our drives, in June. He hadn't given in years — and we made a big deal out of it!”

***“Giving blood is a way to do community outreach. It is a way for the parish to impact our local community. There is always a need for blood, and especially in the winter because people can't always get out to give. Our Christmas blood drive is essential because it helps to replenish our local supplies. This is a time of critical need. It doesn't cost to give, and it's such a gift for those who need it.” — Julie Gortemaker***

If you would like more information about the blood drive, or to register, please call Julie Gortemaker at 308-382-4753.

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### 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.