



From the Heart

Ex Corde
Del Corazon
From the Heart



A quarterly message from
Sacred Heart Church
to all of our members

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HEART OF JESUS, KING AND CENTER OF ALL HEARTS

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2016

BY FR. JOHN SAUER

Vision 2016. Several years ago, the Diocese of Winona began a process of planning for the staffing of parishes with a decreased number of priests and decreasing populations in many of our communities. Combined with some aging buildings it became clear that the way forward could not be the status quo. So the Diocese invited the parishes and parish leadership in to dialogue to develop a plan for how to staff parishes and how to better serve the needs of the Catholic faithful of southern Minnesota.

As I am sure you know some parishes and parish clusters are slated for significant change. Some parishes will be moving to oratory status which means that Mass will be celebrated only on special occasions. Some of these parishes have decided to close the parish and put their efforts into the life of their receiving parish. These decisions have meant that some of our parish clusters will change. For example, the cluster which now encompasses Blooming Prairie and Hayfield will also include members of the Dodge Center, West Concord, Claremont, Geneva and Ellendale parishes. Dodge Center will remain open as a parish while the others will go to oratory status.

Our own parish cluster will be unchanged at this time. For that reason, we have used the past months to look at two main issues: how will we better serve the needs of our parishioners and how can we collaborate more effectively

in the future. Both parishes (Sacred Heart and Holy Trinity, Litomysl) have turned to their parish mission statements and developed several core goals that we will pursue for the future.

The Sacred Heart mission statement states: *Drawing our life from the Eucharist our parish family will live the mission of Jesus Christ through prayer, faith formation and service.* As we reflected on the present state of our parish and our desire for the future we chose two goals which we are now in the process of fleshing out.

The first calls us to support each other in developing a deeper relationship with Jesus. That is at the heart of who we are and at the heart of our mission statement. In the Eucharist we encounter the risen Jesus as he comes to us under the form of bread and wine. At the Last Supper Jesus said, "Take and eat this is my body/take and drink this is my blood." Eating his body and drinking his blood is an invitation to a deeply personal connection.

We are exploring ways of assisting each other in developing this relationship. We are looking at the ways we celebrate Mass, the events we offer that support our faith such as bible studies and faith sharing. We have some wonderful opportunities already but want to be thoughtful and strategic about keeping this at the center of our parish life.

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Feb. 11 Parent Meeting

St. Mary's School held a parent/stakeholders meeting on Thursday evening, Feb. 11th at the Sacred Heart Parish Center. The objective of the meeting was to discuss and answer questions about the "fix" for St. Mary's School and roll out the campaign, Investing in our Children.

Investing in our Children Campaign

We need to raise 2.5 million to fund St. Mary's and Faith Formation Facilities Repair. The goal is to raise all the funds necessary for the repairs to our building and the costs associated with the relocation for the 2015-16 school year. Please consider making

a pledge for the children of St. Mary's School and Faith Formation programs. Campaign envelopes were available after the masses beginning on Feb. 6 through Feb. 21st at both churches. Leftover envelopes were mailed. If you did not receive one please call or stop in at the school office. Thank you!

Registration

St. Mary's is currently enrolling students for the 2016-17 school year. Please call the school with questions or for more information, 507-446-2300 or email admissions@stmarys-owatonna.org.

Save the Date

Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 16, the 30th annual Night of Knights auction. Doors open at 4 pm and admission is \$10. We will again be doing mobile bidding so remember to bring your cell phone. Tickets are now on sale for the car (\$50) and vacation raffle (\$20). Please stop in at the school office to purchase your tickets. Line up your sitter and join us for an exciting evening while raising money for St. Mary's School yearly operating costs. Hope to see you there! Viva Las Vegas. . .



OUR LADY, UNDOER OF KNOTS: MY MIRACLE STORY

BY JANET HANSON

My name is Janet Hanson, and I returned to the Catholic faith in April of 2010. I was back for Holy Week. I had been gone for 47 years. It was a special time: the Lord had gently led me home, just in time to say a sad goodbye to my sister Pat. I know I will see her again, but I still miss her. During the years I've been back in the Church, I have felt the love and care of the Blessed Virgin Mary in my life. I know that with her help a miracle happened two years ago on Ash Wednesday: I got sober.

I have much to share about my journey back to the Church, and the wonderful times I have had during my six years back. When I returned, some things I remembered and others were so new to me. I still stumble through some of the prayers we say after the rosary. One thing I have realized is how very special Our Blessed Virgin is to my faith walk. I had accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior in 1972. I had a wonderful relationship with Him, and I knew His Father, as Abba Father. But knowing the Blessed Virgin Mary added another dimension to my faith.

Mary has changed my life and showed me with so much grace and mercy. I was introduced to OUR LADY, UNDOER OF KNOTS, on Ash Wednesday of 2014. It is quite a miraculous story. I went to church early, so I could get a close place to park. It was icy and I did not want to fall, I hurt enough already with symptoms similar to Rheumatoid Arthritis, or RA. I went into the church, and there was a table with devotionals for Lent. I got one of the booklets; then I saw a small basket with some pamphlets. Right on the top, there was this pamphlet about Mary. To this day I cannot find out where this pamphlet came from. Maybe an angel brought it there; it was meant for me to have. So God put together Mary and the Ash Wednesday Service, and I knew something special had happened. I went home from the service, and read the pamphlet about OUR LADY, UNDOER OF KNOTS. I knew the next morning my life would never be the same again.

My sobriety has been hinged on Mary. There were many years of my life I did not drink at all, but when my

husband Byron was diagnosed with cancer in 2002, my whole world went on tilt. I just could not hold it all together. I was somewhat of a control freak, but I could not control the cancer. This is when the innocent glass of wine comes in. Nothing wrong with a glass of wine, then two, or three, and soon my world was a mess. I was what is called a "closet drinker." Very few people knew I drank, and it had gone into excess. My own brothers did not know, Byron's family did not know, some of my closest friends did not know. I did not even realize how bad it had gotten. I cannot take credit for the miraculous healing; it is God's grace and mercy, and very much the loving hand of Mary.

So this year, Ash Wednesday marks two years of sobriety. I am very sorrowful that my life had gone into such a tilt; somewhat like a tilter roll ride, but it went faster, and faster, and I could not stop it. Only the grace and mercy of God and the Blessed Virgin Mary wrapped me in their arms of love, and loved me back to life. It has been a wonderful six years in the Church, and I look forward to many more.

Social Justice Ministry Update

Four times a year, the Social Justice Committee sponsors a 2nd collection on the 3rd Sunday of the month at Sacred Heart. We are accepting requests from organizations that would like to be considered for one of these collections for 2016-2017 (beginning Sept. 2016). If your organization is non-profit and in need of funds to sustain your program, please submit a written request, including mission statement & intended use of these funds to: Social Justice 2nd Collection, c/o Sacred Heart Church, **by March 25, 2016.**

Sacred Heart was blessed to have the opportunity to be a part of several Social Justice efforts the last quarter of 2015. These are the highlights..... October marked the 19th Annual Clothesline Winter Coat Drive. Thanks to so many of you who donated coats, hats, scarves, gloves and mittens to this very worthy cause. Most of us are fortunate to have adequate outerwear to keep us warm during the winter months. Many of us even have more than one coat to choose from. Unfortunately, this is not the case for many Steele County families. Your generosity provided warmth and comfort for many individuals and families again this year. In November, we assembled 112 Thanksgiving Food Baskets for those in need in our community and parish. This was another record number of baskets we were able to provide. Thanks to all of you who made monetary donations or helped with assembly or delivery of the baskets to make this a reality for so many. For several years now, we have partnered with the South Central Human Relations Center in Owatonna to provide bas-

kets for many clients they serve who suffer from a variety of mental illnesses. These baskets are a true blessing to those individuals. Food baskets were also provided to several Sacred Heart families in need this year, as well as to the Lily Sparrow and Hospitality Houses. Our parish was able to assist close to 300 individuals with food for Thanksgiving meals and beyond, this year.

We are working on some ideas that will allow parishioners, including our children, to become more directly involved in the Thanksgiving Basket project. You will hear more about this in October, so please stay tuned to learn about this wonderful opportunity to truly become the hands and feet of Jesus.

This year, our parish Giving Tree project provided gifts for close to 250 individuals. Over half these gifts went to men, women and children who receive services through the Crisis Resource Center (CRC), in Owatonna. As you may recall, CRC comes to the aid of those who have directly experienced some form of physical or emotional abuse. Several Sacred Heart families were the recipients of many of the Giving Tree gifts as well. This was the first year the Giving Tree was a true Advent Tree until shortly before Christmas. It was initially decorated with only pine cones and the paper heart ornaments and then was fully decorated and transformed into our Christmas Giving Tree the weekend before Christmas. This is a new tradition that we will continue in the years to come.

In closing, we'd like to share some "from the heart" thank you notes we received from Giving Tree recipients.....

"I wanted to thank whoever took part in the gift I received from CRC. I received a gift card and mug that had the words 'Miracles happen.' This really touched my heart because of an uncertain time I had recently. I felt reassured that God would work on myself and child's benefit. I know with great faith, God is in control and is watching over us. Thank you again for the gift card and letting God use you to speak to me."

"Words cannot express the gratitude I feel. You have made a Christmas for my children and myself extra special. Thank you so very much! May God bless you all and keep you!"

"Thank you so much for thinking of my family this holiday season!! It has been a year of challenges, but also a year of successes. I was so surprised when I got a call from the Crisis Resource Center to pick up a gift. It means more than you can know, and I hope I can repay your kindness in the years to come. The Crisis Resource Center saved my life and greatly improved the quality of life for my children. Thank you for helping them do what they do and helping my family."

Our Committee would like to thank you, Sacred Heart, for being a parish that is passionate about serving and providing for those in need. If you are feeling called to be more closely involved with Social Justice efforts by serving on our committee, we would appreciate your gift of time and talents. Please contact Tami at 456-5794 for more information.

".....whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Matthew 25:40

***Drawing our life from the Eucharist our parish family will live
the mission of Jesus Christ through prayer, faith formation, and service***

Sacred Heart Parish along with our Social Justice Committee has been involved since 2005 with the Matamba Parish in Njombe Diocese in Tanzania, Africa. We have been a sister parish since 2005. We have visited Matamba in 2006 with Tammy Ebeling and Denny Werner. We have seen firsthand the need to feed, clothe, educate and provide health care for the children of Matamba. The last ten years we have given over \$100,000.00. In 2012 Fr. John Sauer and Denny Werner visited the parish again to see where our gifts are being used. It was truly inspiring to see the progress in the six years since the first visit. Fr. Augustine Mbiche, the parish priest at Matamba, has been very busy with building St Monica Primary School on the grounds of the

church. He now has grades kindergarten thru 7th Grade built since 2005. He constantly needs food to feed the children in the school. 100% of the money we send is used for these needs. Fr Mbiche hopes to visit Sacred Heart Parish next year to thank all of us. We thank all for their continued prayers and generous contributions in helping those less fortunate. For more information, there are pamphlets titled "Caring Hands for Tanzania" on the table next to the nursery.

The following is an excerpt from a recent letter from Fr. Augustine Mbiche

"I have a great honor to wish you again Happy New Year 2016. St. Monica's School has been open already on January 10th, 2016. The Teachers and the Pupils are in good health and are ready to attend

classes. Last year the total number of pupils was 315 but this year we expect to have more pupils until today there are 340 pupils therefore there a great chance of having more Kids in our School. The secret of this increase is the good National Examination Results by the Kids in our School.. Most of the people have been moved by the results of last year."

From the left: Head Teacher, Rehema Nyambo, Arnold Neto, Samwel Neto And School Director.



PASTORAL CARE

BY MARY TRENDA

Does it appear that we are HEARING more this year about the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and about DOING these works of Mercy? In the document, *Misericordiae Vultus* (The Face of Mercy), Pope Francis calls on all Christians to reflect and act upon the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy during the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. He reminds us that as often as we serve our brothers and sisters in these ways, we are serving Christ himself. The Corporal Works of Mercy are drawn mainly from the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46): feed, give drink, shelter, clothe, visit and bury. A group of Sacred Heart parishioners have started a Prayer Shawl Ministry (a Corporal Work of Mercy), under the umbrella of Pastoral Care. It includes, "Prayer, Blessings, Love, Knitting, Crocheting, Giving, Receiving and Friendship. Most of the crocheting is done at home. Yarn is furnished by the par-

ish. Shawls are blessed by our priests and delivered by volunteers. We have delivered dozens since we began. The group meets on the 4th Thursday of the month at 9am in the Vine Room in the Parish Center. We need more people who love to crochet to fulfill our need for Prayer Shawls. When needs surface, we want to be able to help. Interested? Please give Sue a call (451-3765). The Spiritual Works of Mercy are acts by which we help our brothers and sisters with their spiritual and emotional needs. Our Prayer Chain, also under the umbrella of Pastoral Care, is a Spiritual Work of Mercy, that offers prayers of supplication (for requests) and prayers of thanksgiving and praise to our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. If you would like to be a member of our prayer group or have a prayer request, please call or e-mail Mary (451-6832) or mary-trenda@yahoo.com or call Vel (451-6392). Prayer requests when re-

ceived are sent out as soon as possible. Only information provided, no names are used, is passed on and all requests are confidential. A parish the size of SH has many daily prayer needs and many parishioners who spend time in prayer each day. Please become a link in our prayer chain and contact us with your requests. Our parish family supports you. God listens to all prayer! We have a lifelong duty to strive to fulfill the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy as our way of serving Jesus and living out our Catholic Faith. These are just two of the many opportunities that we have at SH, in Pastoral Care and Social Justice, to be "the hands and feet of Jesus"! So as a part of our nightly examination of conscience, during this Jubilee Year of Mercy, we may want to ask ourselves: What have I done today to see and to care for Christ in my brothers and sisters?

In February, my husband Ben and I spent a Saturday taking part in a marriage enrichment day with the Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul. It was a bit of a decision as to whether we wanted to actually do this or not: it meant arranging child-care when we already do this a lot because of work schedules, giving up a relaxing day at home, and a precious morning of sleep! But in the end, we were both so glad we made the time and space in our lives to intentionally look at our relationship and the partnership God has called us to. I've found that it's much too easy to take a relationship, even one as important as a marriage, for granted. We can go on automatic pilot and just assume things will always be just fine.

One area we particularly enjoyed was a talk on communication. I know that in a relationship, and in the busyness of family life, it is easy to function as "two ships passing in the night." It is also quite possible to feel very alone in a marriage. The speaker spoke of how isolated she felt as a stay at home mom when her husband left each day and went out in the "real world" and she felt left behind, and had little understanding of what he faced each day. I know from experience that couples where both partners work have a different challenge:

each can be so busy and wrapped up in career, in the strains and stresses and demands of the job, and then caring for children, that working on quality time with our partner gets put lower and lower on the priority list. So when the speaker encouraged us to begin a habit of rising and retiring together, my ears perked up. We don't do this well at all. Ben goes to bed earlier and naturally rises earlier than I do. How would we, how could we, incorporate this into our married lives?

The idea of rising together means that we take 5-10 minutes at the beginning of the day to connect with each other. It can be at the dining room table or on the couch, with a cup of coffee in hand. It can be a time to hear what each is facing that day, just that day. Perhaps a deadline or a stressful meeting is coming, or some long anticipated thing we've been looking forward to is finally here. Share what we have on our plate that day and ask our partner for their support, their prayers for what we face. Bless each other with a kiss, or with the sign of the cross marked on our hands for the work we will do that day. To rise together means discussing when it will happen and how long the time together will last, and what the format will look like. To rise together means it will probably in-

volve making a sacrifice. Maybe one of us has to get up earlier. Maybe our morning routines and rituals have to change. Maybe we even have to skype in with one another at a set time when we are apart. How beautiful for the children to walk out of their bedrooms and "catch" mom and dad sharing this important time of the day, and to be formed by this image of their parents starting their day together in a prayerful, relaxed way.

The idea of retiring together means much of the same. A couple needs to discuss the timing of it, the location, and the format. Will it involve praying night prayer together from Liturgy of the Hours, daily Scripture, or perhaps an examination of conscience as each reviews the day and the times we may have fallen short in an interaction with the children, with a colleague, and with each other. Perhaps a high point and a low point of the day can be shared, the Our Father can be prayed, and once again, a blessing of the other. How beautiful for one or the other to be able to share a spoken prayer of gratitude to God for the life that is shared. We were called to marriage to learn how to love. We were called to give our lives away. May we take that calling to heart!

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2016 CONTINUED

BY FR. JOHN SAUER

The second goal challenges us to increase participation in the life of our parish. We are so blessed to have a great group of volunteers and ministry partners. They minister at Mass, take communion to the homebound, knit prayer shawls, reach out to families and couples in need or crisis, help us with administrative tasks, dust the pews before weekend Masses, serve coffee and donuts, reach out to those who are bereaved, and the list could go on and on.

But the reality is that the majority of the work is done by a minority of parishioners. As our stewardship talks this fall pointed out, those who have become involved find a real sense of connection and affirmation in what they do.

Please pray for our community as we continue to plan and implement our goals. I invite you to begin praying the "Amazing Parish Prayer" which we are adopting as our own.

*Heavenly Father, You have gathered us together as a parish to be Your visible life in our world. Here we unite in worship, proclaim your Word, celebrate the Eucharist, and are sent forth to share Your love and make disciples. Lord, we take your Great Commission seriously and long for our parish to be so on-fire that we draw people to You. Help us in that endeavor, as we strive to work together – ordained, religious and laity. Please make our parish amazing, through Your power and Your grace.
Amen.*

a season of renewal

Join us this Lenten Season...

Holy Week Schedule March 24-27
 Holy Thursday - Mass of the Lord's Supper
 Morning Prayer 7:15am
 Mass -- 5:30 & 7:30pm (Español)
 Adoration from 8:30 pm - Midnight
 Good Friday - Celebration of the Passion of the Lord
 Morning Prayer 7:15am
 Good Friday Service -- 1:00 & 5:30pm
 7pm Live Stations of the Cross followed by Service at 7:30pm
 (Español)
 Holy Saturday - Easter Vigil
 Mass -- 8:30pm Sacred Heart (Joint Celebration of the English and Spanish Speaking Communities)
 Easter Sunday
 Mass - 7:30, 9, and 10:30am; 1pm (Español)

Stations of the Cross at 5:15pm
 February 12, 19, 26; March 11, 18
 Adoration During Stations
 Reconciliation afterward
Communal Reconciliation
 March 4 at 6:30pm (Sacred Heart)
Live Stations of the Cross (REP)
 March 23 at 3:30 and 6:45pm
 (Sacred Heart)

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Send your newsletter articles and photos to:
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 Bulletin materials are due by Tuesday, 12:00 pm for the upcoming weekend

Celebrating 150 Years

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From the Heart

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