



# ST. JAMES BASILICA *of Jamestown*

Parish Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2015



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## Christian Mimes

### *Walking the Final Days of Christ's Life*

Barb Hogan was nervous. It was a couple years ago when our Christian Mime Ministry was about to deliver a very special performance. The group was doing its customary walkthrough of Christ's Passion. But it was the location – a nearby prison – that had Barb feeling uneasy. As one of the five coordinators of the ministry, Barb knew the task at hand, but she just felt nervous being there. Although she knew the performers were safe, she still felt unsettled as she worked the lights with her back to the crowd.

see it, because it makes Christ's Passion and what He went through for us real. It brings it to each one of us, that He did this for us."

The Christian Mime Ministry communicates the last days of Christ's life non-verbally, with gesture, movement and facial expression. The performance, which lasts about 45 minutes, follows the Stations of the Cross, but also includes earlier scenes such as the Last Supper and Judas' betrayal.

Performances are held at all sorts of venues – not just Catholic churches – and

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"And then all of a sudden, I heard the women behind me crying," she remembers. "The prisoners were crying, and I thought, 'Wow – we brought this to them.' It really meant a lot to

*Once make-up is applied, no speaking is allowed. The white symbolizes death to self, and that the actors are servants of Christ.*



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## STEWARDSHIP

### *New Year's Resolutions and Stewardship*

The beginning of the year is a popular time for personal reassessment. The earth has finished one more revolution around the sun. The days are shorter, and an evening of introspection seems more inviting. Somehow, when we take down the old calendar and tack up the new, we sense an opportunity to make a fresh start.

To make the best of this opportunity – which, truthfully, exists in June just as it does in January – it is useful to make firm commitments. It's even more useful to write them down. These resolutions, kept in a desk drawer or on the refrigerator door, are a "hard copy" of our best intentions for self-improvement. They're signposts that redirect our lives towards good, and towards God.

New Year's resolutions are often focused on personal health – losing weight, relaxing more or smoking less. It is certainly important, of

course, to take good care of our bodies. But Christianity offers us a fuller concept of self-improvement. St. Paul reminds us that both the body and the soul need an exercise program. In fact, every aspect of our persons – physical, mental, spiritual, emotional – can benefit from an annual self-audit.

Some people have taken to heart this multifaceted concept of the self, and each year make one resolution for each area. For instance, one could resolve to join a Rosary prayer group to work on spirituality, or take a continuing education course to build mental skills. Still, others use the three theological virtues – faith, hope and love – to guide their resolution-making process.

By now you may have discerned a similarity between New Year's resolutions and stewardship commitments. First, we use a similar method to think about stewardship,

by breaking it down into more specific concepts – time, talent and treasure. Second, to become better stewards, we write down our commitments. We record our good intentions to clarify exactly what they are – and to remind us of our commitment on the evenings when the Rosary group interferes with a bowl game.

Any serious commitment shares the same components – it is specific and it is written. From marriages to mortgages, treaties to trades, serious resolutions are spelled out both literally and figuratively.

But even more important than the methodology of a commitment is the heart of the person who makes it. Even the most well-written job descriptions are useless unless there is someone to do the job well! Let us pray that this new year is a time of grace and wisdom for those of us who seek to recommit our lives to our family, our parish and our God.

Resolutions 2015

*A Letter from Our Pastor*

## Are We Prepared to Match Jesus' Gifts to Us?

Dear Parishioners,

Another Christmas season has come to a close, and for most of us, it was another wonderful season filled with extraordinary gift giving. Now, with a new year upon us, I would like to turn our focus to an even more extraordinary type of gift.

This gift is not the traditional “present” we give to loved ones. No, this gift is ongoing and never-ending, bearing a value far beyond the realm of our comprehension.

This is the gift of the Eucharist. “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Those are words that we associate with the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. They are words that carry a meaning beyond our abilities to really appreciate them at times. Christ’s eternal gift to us calls us to share it with others. We need to strive in this new year to receive the Lord with humility and love, and then to pass that on to our families, our friends, our faith community, and all those with whom we may come in contact.

It is through the Eucharist that we become one with the Lord. It is through Him that we receive the strength to be good stewards. We need to receive this incredible gift and share the Good News with all around us. When we approach the Eucharist, we must always keep in mind the real presence of Jesus Christ, and that in itself is a humbling experience.

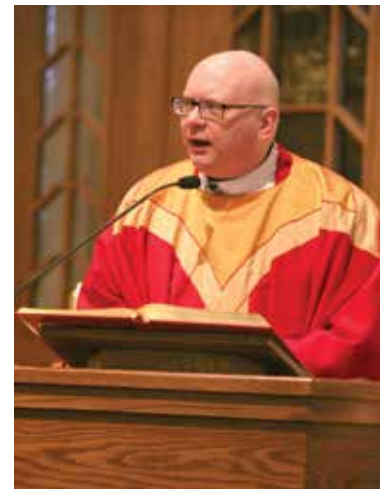
In addition to the Eucharist, we continually receive the gifts of time and talents. A new year reminds us of these gifts. Although each of us may receive different gifts, we all receive an equal gift of time. If you are making resolutions, a good one might be to find the time to pray and to reflect and to share our gifts with others. Each of us needs to set aside time each day for God. In fact, each of us should endeavor to set aside multiple times a day to pray to and to listen to God.

Are we prepared to take the risk in using our time, talents and resources to build the Kingdom of God? That is the true determination of stewardship — whether we accept this risk with the kind of trust in God to which we are called. Our faith is measured by the risks we are willing to take to live it out. Christ Himself risked it all by going to the Cross and models true sacrifice for all of us. Through that sacrifice, He continues to give us the greatest gift of all — the Eucharist. We need to accept that gift and use it to fulfill our own lives and the lives of those around us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Msgr. Jeffrey L. Wald  
Pastor



*Are we prepared to take the risk in using our time, talents and resources to build the Kingdom of God? That is the true determination of stewardship — whether we accept this risk with the kind of trust in God to which we are called.*



## *Kirk and Leann Staying Committed Through*

If parishioners Kirk and Leann Ripplinger could teach other Catholics one thing, it would be a simple lesson.

The Ripplingers know firsthand that, if we allow Him, God can recognize our untapped talents and lead us to sharing those talents with others. They say the key is acknowledging our talents as gifts and using them to live the life of a good steward.

“Good stewardship requires us to discern our gifts, to thank God for our gifts, to hone our gifts, and to share our gifts with others, with our Church, and with the world,” Kirk says. “When we reject stewardship, then we turn our back on what makes us a Christian and on our roles as members of the Body of Christ. It may go against society’s standards, but stewardship is one way we live our obedience to God.”

But for stewardship to work, it has to come from a foundation of faith, something that is important to both Kirk and Leann. Originally from Devils Lake, N.D., Kirk says the Benedictine priests from his childhood – specifically Fr. Gerald Busch and Fr. Larry Burnett – were instrumental in his faith formation. In fact, Fr. Gerald encouraged Kirk to attend Cardinal Muench Seminary during high school, and he even secured a scholarship through the Knights of Columbus to relieve the financial burden the tuition placed on Kirk’s family.

“After 47 years, I know that my faith is important to me because it is the Truth,” Kirk says. “We live in a world where



*Kirk and Leann Ripplinger*

individuals want to decide what is true, but Christ established the Truth and He did so in the form of the Catholic Church.”

Growing up in Hebron, N.D., Leann’s childhood was equally immersed in the faith, and she learned from her parents’ example, as well as those of her grandparents and a nearby aunt and uncle.

“My faith began to grow in high school when my brother was seriously injured in a car accident,” Leann says. “Our family began to pray the Rosary together, and even though I didn’t always appreciate it at

the time, I recognized the gift of faith and how it can guide and strengthen us during life’s struggles. But it was during college at the University of North Dakota that my faith really flourished. I was active at the St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center where I found wonderful friends who also treasured the Catholic faith.”

Coincidentally, it was at the Newman Center that Kirk and Leann met. Today they have been married 17 years, have four children – Kaitlyn, 16; Noah, 13; Monica, 10; Rachel, 8 – and in the 16 years they have been members of our parish, they have found ways to get involved both individually, and as a couple. Kirk is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, takes Holy Communion to the homebound, serves on the Stewardship Committee, and recently started volunteering as a catechist for the seventh and eighth-grade students. Leann is an instructor in the Creighton Model NFP, leads a Bible study in her home,

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# Leann Ripplinger

## Faith, Prayer and Stewardship

serves as an accompanist during Mass, and assists with the catechesis for Vacation Bible School. As a couple, they have provided transportation and chaperoned for the senior high and middle school youth rallies.

Since Kirk and Leann believe that stewardship is a family affair, their four children have also found ways to actively participate. Kaitlyn cantors, is a member of the youth choir, attended the Steubenville Conference this year, and participates in the diocese high school youth rallies. Noah is in the youth choir, participated in the middle school youth rally, and attended Militia Immaculata (MI) Camp. Monica is an altar server, sings in the children's choir, and is a student at St. John's Academy Catholic Elementary School. Rachel attends St. John's Academy and recently received her First Reconciliation.

Like many of us, the Ripplinger family stays busy. Between work – Kirk is a custodian at the University of Jamestown and Leann is an occupational therapist at the Jamestown Regional Medical Center – family obligations and school activities, there isn't a lot of free time. So how do they stay committed to giving back through stewardship? For them, the answer is found in prayer. Kirk finds strength in doing a morning offering, in taking short, five minute exams throughout the day, and by attending daily Mass at least twice a week. Leann looks forward to spending time in front of the Blessed Sacrament during monthly adoration, finding comfort in those quiet hours in the middle of the night where there are no distractions.

Ultimately, by having a faith that is nourished in prayer, stewardship is the means by which we can put our faith



*Kirk and Leann Ripplinger with their children, (from left) Noah (13), Kaitlyn (16), Rachel (8) and Monica (10)*

into action. Sometimes this involves taking a risk or going out of our comfort zone – but as Kirk and Leann show us, by allowing God's gifts to shine by serving others, we are answering God's call to a vocation of stewardship.

"We just try to live as Christ commanded us," Leann says. "Gandhi once said, 'I like your Christ, but your Christians are nothing like your Christ.' I don't find his words insulting – in many ways, he is probably right. But his words do motivate us to see Christ in others and to share our gifts to meet their needs."

*Gifts, to hone our gifts, and to share our gifts with others, with our Church, in what makes us a Christian and on our roles as members of the Body of Christ is one way we live our obedience to God." – Kirk Ripplinger*



## The Great Catholic Educator: *St. Thomas Aquinas*

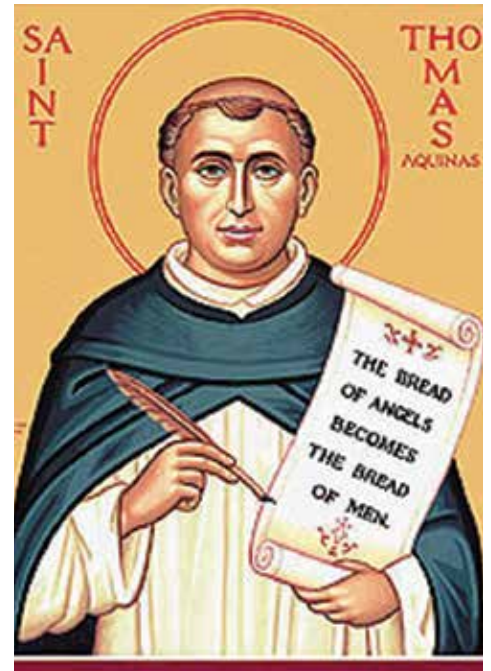
Before Thomas Aquinas was even born, a holy hermit told his mother he was to be more learned and holy than any other person of his time. As a young boy, he was devoted to prayer and meditation, and his intellectual gifts were quickly recognized. When he was about 11 years old, he was sent to the University of Naples, and about five years later, he became a Dominican friar.

Thomas' parents were Italian nobility and were not enthusiastic about Thomas' choice of vocation. They went so far as to have his brothers capture him while he was en route to Rome, and they held him prisoner for two years in an effort to destroy his vocation and his virtue. After the family made one particularly heinous attempt at breaking Thomas' faith and spirit, he begged God to give him integrity of mind and body, and he was miraculously given the girdle and grace of purity for the rest of his life. This gift almost certainly was essential to the remarkable clarity of his intellect.

After he regained his freedom, Thomas received the best education that was available during a time in human history that arguably represents the best the world has ever offered to scholars and philosophers. His greatest works arise from his total focus on knowing and understanding God, and revealing as clearly as possible the Truth of God to others. He showed that faith and reason are not in conflict, but exist in harmony.

Thomas' *Summa Theologica* uses philosophical principles presented in scientific form to systematically explain Christian theology. It was his last work and was left unfinished. Thomas stopped writing after he experienced an unusually long vision on Dec. 6, 1273. When he was urged to finish his *Summa*, he stated that he could no longer write, for the secrets he had been shown during his vision made all he had written "seem as straw." He died three months later.

Thomas composed more than 60 works. His powers of synthesis were truly extraordinary. He was able to



sift through all that he read, distill the truth, and summarize his conclusions simply, clearly and briefly. His writing is of such genius that it transcends style and art in the beauty of its truth. His works are as relevant today as they were to the 13th century. His principles offer a remedy to such evils as socialism, communism, nihilism, as well as pantheism and spiritism.

Thomas was canonized in 1323, and was declared a Doctor of the Universal Church in 1567. In 1879, Leo XIII declared Thomas Aquinas "the prince and master of all scholastic doctors," and in 1880, the same pontiff designated Thomas as patron of all Catholic universities, colleges and schools throughout the world. We celebrate St. Thomas Aquinas' feast day on Jan. 28.

*Thomas' greatest works arise from his total focus on knowing and understanding God, and revealing as clearly as possible the Truth of God to others. He showed that faith and reason are not in conflict, but exist in harmony.*



Margaret "Babe" Boyd



Gloria Bartlett

## OFFICE ASSISTANTS SERVE GOD AND PARISH

**H**ow can something as routine as running a copy machine or answering telephones translate to an act of faith to serve God?

The volunteer office assistants who offer their skills to the hard-working staff in the St. James parish office can tell you. The St. James staff will call upon this pool of willing assistants when extra hands are needed, knowing that the volunteers are more than willing to serve their parish and God with their talents.

Two of the volunteers are Gloria Bartlett and Margaret "Babe" Boyd, who share their observations and experiences.

Gloria has been volunteering in the office for about six years. She recounts that when she was going through a personal crisis, the parish office staff reached out to her.

"The staff was so wonderful to me," she says. "They surrounded me with faith and love. And later, when I stopped in they asked me if I wanted to help – they could use help. I said 'I'll try.'"

Gloria brought to the parish office the computer skills she had acquired during her former career at Jamestown Hospital. She was able to set up a

computer program in the office and took care of the necessary data entry.

"I feel grateful to work," she says. "I truly have my way of giving back to my church. I feel a calm feeling when it's really quiet. I think that the Lord is pleased with what I'm doing. I'm serving God. I just have such a good feeling when I'm there for a morning or an afternoon, or all day."

The assistants are called in when one of the secretaries is absent, or there are extra tasks. They compile new parish member packets, prepare the bulletins, answer the phone, transfer calls, take notes for incoming calls, make copies, or direct visitors to a parish staffer.

Margaret "Babe" Boyd says she has been serving as an office assistant since she retired as a nurse from Jamestown Hospital in 2008 and Fr. Bitz asked her to help.

"I fill in when one of the girls needs a day off," she says. "I answer the phone, greet people who come in and direct them to who they are looking for or the service they are looking for."

Like Gloria, Babe says she also experiences God's presence in her work.

"I try to see God in everyone," Babe says. "I'm making a connection with

them. He's at the church office, too. It's a good feeling. As a nurse for many years, it's kind of in my bones to help others."

Babe says she sees Christ in action with her co-workers in the office.

"They're very caring people and you can really see Christ in their lives," she says. "They really have a gift."

"And you see it all," Babe continues. "A lot of people come in for help. With the [drilling] boom in western North Dakota, you see a lot. My contribution is trying to help them out."

Gloria says she believes she encounters Christ when she is called upon to offer a compassionate ear to a caller in distress.

"One day, I had a lady on the phone for 20 minutes," Gloria recalls. "I had two people waiting in the office and I waved my hand [to acknowledge them] because I don't want to be rude. But no, I won't hang up. The woman had a sick husband. I told her I would contact a priest to come see her. I felt I could help her."

Anyone interested in becoming an office assistant may call the parish office at 701-252-0119.



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## Weekend Mass

### *Saturday Vigil*

4:30 p.m. Mass

### *Sunday*

8:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Mass

## Daily Mass

*Monday thru Friday* - 12:10 p.m. Mass

*Saturday* - 8:00 a.m. Mass

## Reconciliation

*Monday thru Friday* - 11:40 a.m. - 12 noon

*Saturday* - 3:30 p.m.

Address Service Requested

## Christian Mimes

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teenagers from various Christian faiths participate. It encourages ecumenical unity, bringing all together in the sacrifice of Christ and His love for us. Jessica Vandell, a current mime who often plays the role of Mary, says that this fellowship is one of the reasons she returns to the ministry year after year.

"Personally, I really enjoy the faith community," she says. "It's a group of people that share belief in Christ and you really get to know them and become friends. We communicate Jesus' Passion and enrich the meaning not only for the audience, but also for ourselves. You don't know just the 'what,' but also the 'why,' and it's really a learning experience for all of us. It makes it a lot more realistic and it helps form the connection between Jesus' suffering and our own lives."

Alyssa Mangin, now a junior in college, enjoyed watching her sister, Michelle, and her brother, Phillip, when they were in Christian Mime Ministry. She subsequently joined as soon as she was able. Although she has since aged out, she remembers connecting with the Passion in a new way and carries that with her still.

"My last year performing, it really hit me," Alyssa says. "I never understood how much pain Jesus went through or the

*"It's a group of people that share belief in Christ and you really get to know them and become friends. We communicate Jesus' Passion and enrich the meaning not only for the audience, but also for ourselves. You don't know just the 'what,' but also the 'why,' and it's really a learning experience for all of us. It makes it a lot more realistic and it helps form the connection between Jesus' suffering and our own lives." – Jessica Vandell*

sorrow of Mary until acting it out and being there. I realized, Jesus did all of this, and He did it for us."

Please watch upcoming weekly bulletins for the schedule of this year's events, or call Barb Hogan at 701-252-9255 for more information. Performances are scheduled every Wednesday and Friday during Lent, other than Ash Wednesday. The actors, who range from sixth to 12th grade, travel to Fargo, Bismarck, Harvey, and Oakes to bring the message of Christ's redemption to all who will attend.

"Each and every time, you can gain something new from it," Jessica says. "It visually represents in a different way that Jesus did suffer, that He does love us, and it reminds us of His glory."