

SAINT *Vincent de Paul*



CATHOLIC CHURCH | SEWARD, NEBRASKA

FIRST FRIDAY DEVOTIONS AND DONUTS:

BUILDING FAITH, STEWARDSHIP AND COMMUNITY

What began as two moms wanting their children to continue attending Mass during the week is now the First Friday Devotions and Donuts group that is slated to start up again Friday, Sept. 6.

Kathy Summa and Ann Dobesh each have a son and daughter, respectively. Both are the same age who attended St. Vincent de Paul School and who had attended daily Mass as part of their school day.

“We talked then, that now they would be in public school we wanted them to take part in Mass during the week,” Kathy says. “We planned to meet at 7 a.m. Mass, and then Ann suggested meeting on First Friday, and that was kind of the way the devotion to the Sacred Heart came in. This was when the kids were in sixth grade, and we’ll be starting the fourth year in September.”

For Catholics, First Friday devotions came about during a series of revelations from the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a 17th Century

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FIRST FRIDAY DEVOTIONS AND DONUTS

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French nun. In His revelations, He promised that anyone who received Communion on the First Friday for nine consecutive months in honor of His Sacred Heart, would receive the grace of final penitence at death.

As the First Friday Devotions and Donuts group grew, Kathy brought in adults Nicki Wintz and Mitch Fiala, who teaches CCD classes.

The group meets from September through May for the 7 a.m. First Friday Mass, then adjourns to the church social hall for donuts. Sometimes Fr. Phan or Msgr. Tucker will stop in for a brief visit with the students, before Kathy and the other adults take them to school.

The number who take part varies, with the largest number at 26. The students are in fifth through eighth grade.

Besides encouraging the students to honor the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the group enables the kids to practice stewardship in giving of their time.

“It definitely takes time to get up earlier to get to Mass,” Mitch says. “But it’s really a beautiful program. It helps them encounter Christ on a daily basis and it’s important for them to give time to honor the Lord.”

It has been a habit of the youngsters to tend to sit in the back of the church during Mass, but this year, the adults have directed them straight to the front pew.

“When they’re that close to Christ, it helps the kids in the development of their faith,” Mitch says.

Sometimes during the Mass, there are no regular altar servers, so some of the boys step forward to help.

“This is good for the young men to be able to serve

“I feel the 7 a.m. Mass is very personal. It’s quiet, and I can see the kids deepening in prayer. And after each Mass, we say a prayer to consecrate ourselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This brings us closer to Him and this is a reminder of that.” — KATHY SUMMA

at Mass,” Mitch says.

Kathy sees the early Mass time as a prime opportunity for the students to grow in their faith.

“The main reason is receiving Jesus in the Eucharist,” she says. “It’s so important. I feel the 7 a.m. Mass is very personal. It’s quiet, and I can see the kids deepening in prayer. And after each Mass, we say a prayer to consecrate ourselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This brings us closer to Him and this is a reminder of that.”

As the new series of First Friday Devotions and Donuts begins in September, the goal for Kathy, as well as Mitch, is to encourage high school students to take part.

“It’s hard, because so many high school activities start at 7 a.m.,” Kathy says. “But we’ll encourage high school kids to come.”

“The First Friday Devotion itself is not just for the kids,” Mitch says. “It’s for everyone. I don’t think a lot know about the graces you can receive and the promises Christ made.”



Anyone with questions about the First Friday Devotions and Donuts series may contact Kathy Summa via email at kagmo@wildblue.net.



A NEW THEME FOR A NEW YEAR

Dear Parishioners,

Summer vacation is now over and we are entering into a new season and a new school year. I remember many years ago how exciting it was for me when my father took me to look for new school clothes. Even though I attended a Catholic school, we did not wear school uniforms, so buying new clothes marked the beginning of a new year.

I don't remember when schools started attaching a theme to a new academic year, but it follows a deep tradition in the Church and particularly in growth in the spiritual life. Choosing a theme for the year is a way to keep focused on what is most important. Spiritual directors of the past, like St. Francis de Sales, or of recent times like Fr. Benedict Groeschel encourage us to grow spiritually step by step. The choice of a theme for the year helps us keep that focus on one thing at a time, and then the following year to move on to the next step.

Our School theme this year is the theme for Catholic Schools around the country. It is the national theme that will be celebrated during Catholic Schools Week. The theme focuses on three elements that lead to success. These three elements are not limited to those in Catholic schools, but they are basic and well-founded guides for every person that understands that they are a child of God, gifted and responsible for using those gifts to carry out God's plan. The definition of a successful person is one who faithfully carries out God's plan.

The theme for the year is "Learn, Serve, Lead, Succeed." Learning, serving and leading brings about success. The theme as it is grounded in faith allows a person to succeed, since it is only in knowing God and developing a relationship with Him, that we will carry out His plan. Jesus said that He came to serve not to be served. As we come to know Him, He calls us to serve. Service is really an act of love as we use our gifts and talents for another. Through our example of knowing and

servicing God, we will lead others through that example. Jesus is the perfect servant-leader teaching us how to love the Father by his example.

In just a couple of weeks, many groups of children and adults will be starting in educational programs. The primary goal for all will be that they will learn something. Everyone wants to be successful and the faithful definition of success helps us keep our focus on our eternal destiny of life with God in heaven. Placing the theme "Learn, Serve, Lead, Succeed" on your mirror or your refrigerator will keep it in your mind. Every day is a new day of learning, serving and leading, and keeping that focus will help us be successful. God Bless you.



Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Robert Tucker
Pastor



SHARING THE JOURNEY, T CATHOLICS AT



One of the most difficult aspects of starting college for a young student is the sudden freedom of being away from home for the first time — and with that freedom comes a host of new pressures and challenges that serve to draw a young person away from their faith.

“The majority of college students would rather go party and skip Mass on Sunday, and so it’s difficult for the person trying to grow in their faith alone,” says Rebecca Rerucha, a junior, studying Elementary Education at Concordia University. “But, at Concordia, we have this little Catholic family group and we can grow in our faith together instead of going to parties together.”

Originally from Bruno, Neb., Rebecca transferred to Concordia as a sophomore, after spending a difficult year at her local community college.

“There was no Catholic group and nobody to really talk to [at my community college],” she says. “I had professors who would talk down about the Catholic faith and I had nobody to talk to about it.”

But it wasn’t long after transferring to Concordia that Rebecca discovered a newly formed small group of other Catholics, committed to practicing their faith and growing in their understanding of Church teaching — Catholics at Concordia.

During the school year, the group meets every other Sunday evening for a time of fellowship and discussion. Members of the group often attend

Catholics at Concordia is an opportunity for Catholic students to grow in their faith and fellowship at their Lutheran university.



TOGETHER IN THE FAITH: AT CONCORDIA

Sunday Mass together, as well.

“We’re talking about our faith and trying to answer questions and know what we should say to Lutherans when they ask us questions,” Rebecca says. “Through the conversations we’ve had, I’ve been able to answer my own questions about the faith. A lot of people seem to have the same questions, so I feel like I’m not alone in this. We’ve become a close little family.”

The group also participates in service projects together, from raising money and putting together Easter baskets for children in the hospital, or using their skills to craft items to be raffled at St. Vincent’s annual auction.

“We want to let people know that we’re praying for them, that we want to help out,” Rebecca says. “It’s what Christ calls us to do, so we try to do it.”

For Rebecca, college has been an opportunity to grow in her faith, both when she had fellowship and when she didn’t.

“When I went to [community college], I got a better prayer life because I was alone and I’d sit in my car and pray,” she says. “I got to know Jesus better because I was alone and He was all I had. But at Concordia, I’ve definitely grown in community and I’ve helped others grow closer to God.”

Rebecca is grateful for the support she’s found in her faith.

“At Concordia, if a Lutheran professor brings down the Catholic faith, I have a group to discuss

it with and they’re going through the same thing, and that makes it a lot easier to handle,” she says.

And although the majority of Rebecca’s friends at Concordia are Lutheran, she feels confident in sharing her beliefs with them.

“We debate about our faith sometimes and if I didn’t have Catholics at Concordia, I don’t know what I would say to my Lutheran friends,” she says. “I don’t know if I’d be growing in my faith at all.”

Catholics at Concordia hopes to expand in the coming year and encourages other Catholic students to consider becoming involved.

“You end up learning a lot about your faith and you get to make all these Catholic friends,” Rebecca says. “I think you’ll enjoy it.”

“We’ve become really good friends,” she adds. “We have fun, we laugh and we’ve really become like a family. And we really want more people to become a part of this little Catholic family on campus.”

She also asks the community at St. Vincent de Paul to remember Catholics at Concordia in their prayers and to invite students they know, to participate.

“Please pray for us so we always grow closer to God and grow in our faith,” Rebecca says. “We know some Catholic students who go to Concordia, we see them at Mass but they don’t come to our group. If you go to Concordia, there’s a Catholic group! If you’re a student going to Mass by yourself, join our group! We can go together.”



If you would like more information on Catholics at Concordia, or to become involved in upcoming events, please contact Rebecca Rerucha at 402-643-5960 or Samuel Sisco at samuelsisco98@gmail.com. You can also visit the Catholics at Concordia Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/groups/130325827027657.

FORMATION

Transformed Through Christ

“Jesus not only calls people to him but also forms them and sends them out in his service.”

From Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response

This month, we are emphasizing the third pillar of parish stewardship — formation. Formation is the process of studying Christ’s teachings and incorporating them deeply into our lives. It is a lifelong effort by which we “put on Christ” (Rom 13:14) and are “transformed by the renewal of our minds” (Rom 12:2).

Above all, our formation should include studying Scripture and Church teaching. It should also include discussion with other Catholics and honest self-assessment. Its goal is to “discern the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect” (Rom 12:2).

Because formation helps us understand God’s will, it therefore leads naturally to good stewardship. When our minds are transformed through Christ, we become like Him — as Christ gave His life for us, so we give our lives to others.


Formation is not just an individual task. Instead, it is a communal responsibility that, when applied, will further help St. Vincent de Paul to grow as a stewardship parish. Each one of us has an inherent need to give — to move from “selfishness to selflessness,” as the Diocese of Wichita’s document *The Pillars of Parish Stewardship* aptly states. Formation is a process of spiritual growth, and it leads to a deeper understanding of loving others as God loves us.

Naturally, then, our Catholic formation should not end upon celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation, or turning 18 years old. Formation is a formidable task that we as Catholics should participate in for the duration of our lives. It involves “education of the mind and conversion of the heart” (*The Pillars of Parish Stewardship*), and

helps us to lead the stewardship way of life rather than just understand it.

Start off by reading 10 minutes of Sacred Scripture a day, or by studying a chapter of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on a daily basis. Read a biography of your favorite saint for an example of an individual who lived as a disciple of Christ, and use this person as a role model when tending to your daily tasks. Keep an eye on our weekly parish bulletin for faith formation opportunities at the parish. Before long, your commitment to formation will lead you to naturally live the Catholic faith and understand stewardship in ways that you never imagined before.





RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: CUTTING THROUGH THE NOISE AND GROWING IN FAITH

Modern-day living is both busy and noisy, filled with activities, technology and other distractions that all too easily displace God as our number-one priority. This is perhaps particularly true when it comes to our youth who are continuously bombarded by pop culture, social media and peer pressures. This is why, says coordinator Carmen Brown, Religious Education continues to play such a vital role in parish life.

“It’s a ministry that aids the parents in teaching and sharing the love of Jesus through Scripture and the traditions of our Catholic faith,” Carmen says. “It’s an opportunity to share the love of Jesus with the youth of our parish.”

Here at St. Vincent de Paul, this opportunity is presented through two unique programs — Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) for first through eighth grades, and the Godparent Program for teens in ninth through 12th grades. Both beginning this year on Aug. 21, these programs are designed to help form parish youth in stewardship through various fundraisers, service projects, community building activities and faith instruction.

“Throughout the year we have special Masses, prayer services, Christmas programs, service projects for the community, and fundraisers for our youth to participate in,” Carmen says. “Msgr. Tucker and Fr. Allan Phan are also integral for the formation of the Catholic faith in our youth. In addition to Masses and confessions, they visit each class and celebrate special home Masses for our freshmen Godparent groups. They also conduct parent meetings for those who will have children receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation.”

Both programs meet Wednesday evenings from 7-8:15 p.m. CCD classes take place at the church and are led by volunteer catechists who, despite having work and family responsibilities, give of their time each week to help make the faith come alive for our parish youth. Godparent couples, meanwhile, meet with teen groups in their actual homes, creating an intimate faith sharing experience. This allows teens to grow spiritually within the context of Christian community. And in the process of giving, catechists and Godparents can’t help but grow themselves as they watch the young people blossom.

“It is truly rewarding for all the catechists, Godparents and staff to watch and be able to share in the children’s growth,” Carmen says. “And as the catechists teach, they also are able to learn more about their faith or to [receive] reconfirmations of what they already knew.”

A major event of the Godparent program each year is its annual Fall Retreat. This year’s event will take place Aug. 24-25 at a camp located just outside of Seward. Led by the parish priests



Sixth-grade students enjoy making traditional “Lenten pretzels.”



Youth learn about the sacredness of life during a pro-life presentation.

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and Godparent team, this weekend of fun and enrichment will include Mass and Reconciliation, Eucharistic Adoration, talks given from a variety of speakers, and a campfire Rosary, as well as plenty of fun activities such as canoeing, ziplining, and challenge and trust-building exercises.

“It is amazing to share this experience with our teens, especially during Eucharistic Adoration,” Carmen says. “In a world of constant noise and distractions, it is truly a blessing to witness the

respect and prayerfulness of our teens while in the quiet candle-lit atmosphere with Jesus present in the monstrance.”

In these ways, St. Vincent de Paul hopes to continue supporting parents, says Carmen, in their role as the “first educators” of their children — to provide youth with additional witnesses of Christian discipleship and to help cut through the noise that surrounds them in order to listen to and come to know the Person of Jesus Christ.



If you would like more information about the Religious Education programs and registration for the 2019-2020 year, please stop by the Religious Education Office, visit the parish website at www.stvincentseward.org, or contact Carmen Brown at 402-643-3521, ext. 106.

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Daily Masses: Monday thru Friday at 7:00 a.m., Saturday at 8:00 a.m.

Sunday Obligation Masses: Saturday at 5:30 p.m., Sunday at 8:00 a.m. & 10:00 a.m.

Confession: Monday thru Saturday: 20 minutes before each daily Mass, Saturday: 4:30 to 5:20 p.m., Sunday: 7:30 to 7:50 a.m. & 9:30 to 9:50 a.m. Other confession times available by appointment.