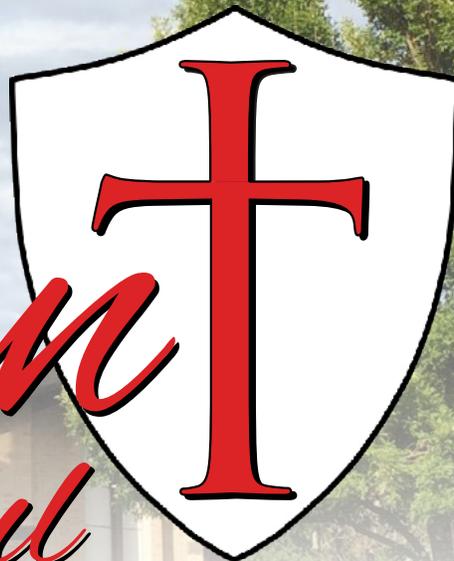




SAINT *Vincent de Paul*



CATHOLIC CHURCH | SEWARD, NEBRASKA

SEPARATED BUT STILL CONNECTED AT ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SCHOOL AN UPDATE DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

*“We know that all things work for good for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose.” — ROMANS 8:28*

Never in her wildest dreams could St. Vincent de Paul School Principal Denise Ray have anticipated the sudden turn the school year would take as a result of the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic.

“This is something that nobody could ever imagine — that it would shut down, really and truly, the entire world,” Mrs. Ray says.

Yet, almost immediately after learning the news on March 16 about the imminent school closures, Mrs. Ray says she began seeing the truth after reflecting on the Scripture passage in Chapter 8 of St. Paul’s letter to the Romans. She saw teachers rising to the occasion and creating innovative lessons, parents cooperating with school faculty to ensure students’ continued



continued on page 5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Keeping the Faith During a Crisis
- 3 Formed by History
- 4 Growing in Grace: The Sacraments of First Eucharist and Confirmation
- 6 Stewardship for Education: Four St. Vincent de Paul Parish Seniors Receive Scholarships
- 7 The Rosary: Our Lady’s Lasso

Keeping the Faith

DURING A CRISIS



Adversity is a part of life. We may face family strife or financial issues. We may experience a personal or family medical crisis. We may suffer the loss of a loved one.

The thought of not being able to attend Mass to receive the Precious Body and Blood of our Lord as a result of a crisis — such as the one we are experiencing today with the COVID-19 pandemic — is devastating.

Right now, it may seem challenging to remain a faithful steward. We may even question our faith and wonder how to find God during these turbulent times.

Where do we turn?

First and foremost, we must pray without ceasing. During a difficult time, you can always turn to the Church's treasury of prayer. Take time each day to read the daily Scripture readings — they can be found at USCCB.org, and then by selecting the date on the calendar on the home page. You can also use the many rich resources of our faith to engage in spiritual reflections each day as an individual and with your family. This can include simple prayers like an *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* a few times a day, as well as praying the Rosary, the Liturgy of the Hours, and Stations of the Cross, among others. Many resources for these are easily found online.

It is also important to remember that at times when you cannot physically attend Mass, Sunday remains a holy day, and you are encouraged to pray. You can participate in prayer by way of televised or live-streamed Mass — one option for viewing daily Mass online can be found at www.wordonfire.org/daily-mass.

During times of crisis, we must also find ways to use our talents to serve God. If you are unable

to participate in ministries and serve your parish community, you can still use your talents to serve your family and those closest to you. Something as simple as calling to check on family and friends — or even doing a video call — can go a long way.

Finally, we must try to remain good stewards of our treasure. You may have lost your job or have seen a reduction in work hours and pay. But despite your hardships, a faithful steward must faithfully try his or her best to return a portion of your treasure to God however He is calling you to do so. Check the parish website for online giving opportunities and do what you can to return a portion of your treasure to God.

No matter the situation, God always remains faithful to us. Don't forget that everything God gives us is a gift, and the way in which we share our gifts with God and our neighbor is ultimately how we give Him glory.

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

*My Jesus, I believe that You are present
in the Most Holy Sacrament.*

*I love You above all things, and I desire
to receive You into my soul.*

*Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.*

*I embrace You as if You were already there and
unite myself wholly to You.*

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen



FORMED BY HISTORY

Dear Parishioners,

As a child, I listened to stories from my father and mother about their childhood and lives as young adults. The stories about my mother living on a small farm were interesting to me. The stories of the Second World War that my father told were also captivating.

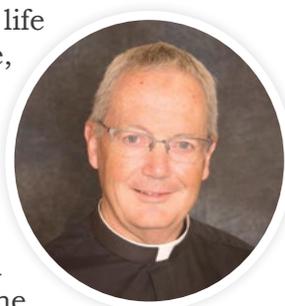
My mother grew up on a farm north of North Platte. They not only had farm ground, but they also had a few dairy cows, some pigs, chickens and a huge garden that they tended. During the 1930s they had everything they needed to care not only for their family, but they cared for people that wandered by their farm. My mother would tell about desperate people stopping by the farm, and my grandfather and grandmother would help them out. The farm was not on a highly traveled road, and Nebraska was not a highly populated state, but travelers would wander by, and they found the help they needed at the farm.

The Second World War had a profound impact on both my mother and father. My father was in a medical unit in France and cared for many wounded soldiers. My mother helped prepare meals for soldiers traveling by train that stopped in North Platte. They loved the people they served, whether it was in a hospital bed, or on an overcrowded train. They used God-given talents during a time in history that needed people of service.

Everyone has their own story filled with blessings and joy, along with trials and heartache. These events shape us into the people we become. Responding to these events with faith make us people of love and compassion, ready to serve others. The time that we are living in calls for a response in faith.

The dramatic changes that began in March were personally challenging, and God invited me through them into a deeper relationship with Him. My immediate response was to try to fix the problem and I found myself constantly wishing that everything would return to normal “now”! In faith, God was inviting me to trust, and in love, He was inviting me

to serve. I am finding that a life built on faith and love is stable, peaceful and service oriented. Whereas, when my focus is on work to control or direct events, there is an abundance of anxiety, fear and discontent. Faith, which leads to trust and love, which guides service, is the way God calls us to live.



I do not believe the last two months are random events of history. I believe these days truly to be an invitation from God to grow in love and service. Events can change a person forever, if we view events as a part of God’s will for us. The proof of how we view this time in history will reveal itself in the way we live our lives from here until its end. If we see countless blessings since this pandemic began in the United States; if we desire to serve others more after countless acts of service; if we say, we have only begun to know how to love God and our neighbor — then, I believe, these days of trial are forming us into a generation that is set apart and becoming a people for God alone. Then, we will be good and faithful stewards of God’s faithful love and abundant goodness. Then we will be the good servants that our world is in need of in this time of history.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Robert Tucker
Pastor



GROWING IN GRACE: *The Sacraments of*

Do you remember your First Communion? Dressing up, sitting with your family in the pew, walking up reverently to receive the Precious Body and Blood of the Lord for the very first time? As Catholics, we believe that, in the Eucharist, we are invited to receive our Lord, truly present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. Our eternal God humbles Himself to be united with us in this sacrament. Each year, a group of our second-grade students has the same experience as they receive the Sacrament of First Eucharist.

Or perhaps your Confirmation stands out more in your memory. Perhaps the scent of chrism, in the sign of a cross on your forehead, is one you'll never forget. Or maybe picking a sponsor or a Confirmation saint was a decision that you gave a lot of thought. Regardless of which specific memories remain, when you received the Sacrament of Confirmation, you were anointed with oil, sealed with the Holy Spirit and fully initiated into the Catholic Church. Earlier this spring, a group of our fifth-grade students joined the ranks of the fully initiated, receiving the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.

Unfortunately, it can be all too easy to take for granted the graces we received in these sacraments. However, if you're looking for inspiration in deepening your appreciation of the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation, perhaps you need not look any further than our young people.

"The Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation are, along with the Sacrament of Baptism,

Sacraments of Initiation," says Religious Education Coordinator Carmen Brown. "Holy Communion is extremely important and necessary for each of us as Catholics. The Mass and Holy Communion are the core of our Catholic faith."

Carmen works with a team to prepare our children for the Sacraments, including our school and CCD teachers, and the children's parents. All those involved work together in helping children understand the great gift they are receiving.

"They guide the children to understanding that they will truly be receiving Jesus on their First Communion Day," Carmen says. "It's a beautiful day when teachers, parents and families join in the celebration of Mass and witness God's young children receiving the consecrated host, which is Jesus — Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity." This year First Communion has been postponed for a future date when the pandemic restrictions have been lifted.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is also a significant moment in the lives of our students.

"As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us, 'The reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace,'" Carmen says. "For 'by the Sacrament of Confirmation, the baptized are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence, they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.'"

The Sacrament of Confirmation was celebrated





First Eucharist and Confirmation

with our fifth-grade students after a time of preparation, studying the basic teachings and prayers of the Catholic Church. Due to the rising concerns of the COVID-19 Virus at the time of Confirmation, Msgr. Robert Tucker, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul, was designated by Archbishop George Lucas to confirm our parish children.

For those who celebrate the sacraments with them, it is a moment of excitement, witnessing our young people receive God’s grace in a new way.

“It gives our teachers great joy as they give witness their students receiving the sacraments,” Carmen says. “It’s a gift from God to see the smiles of our children as they receive Jesus in Holy Communion,

and the Holy Spirit on their Confirmation Day.”

Please continue to pray for those who recently received sacraments, that they would continue to grow in their relationships with Christ and His Church.



If you would like more information on our Sacramental Preparation programs at St. Vincent de Paul, please contact Carmen Brown, Religious Education Coordinator, at 402-643-3521, ext. 106 or carmenbrowndre@gmail.com.

SEPARATED BUT STILL CONNECTED *continued from front cover*

learning, and a profound sense of connectedness despite physical separation.

“It’s amazing what we can all do when we put our minds to it.” Mrs. Ray says. “The teachers have had to adjust and find a whole new way of teaching and partnering with the parents. It’s created a real strong partnership between parents and teachers that we didn’t even know was possible. We are literally depending on each other to make this work. Then, too, there’s been a greater recognition of the special connection between teachers and their students. And thanks to technology, we are finding new ways to connect and continue strengthening that relationship.”

Though there is undoubtedly a steep learning curve, Mrs. Ray says school staff and parents have been able to find a new sort of rhythm by everyone working together. This begins by teachers creating weekly hard-copy packets that are picked up by parents at the school office.

“We really feel like our students still need some time to put pen to paper,” Mrs. Ray says. “We are also using a program called *Flipgrid*. Through it, our teachers are putting together instructional videos that cover anything that is a new learning concept for the children.”

The benefit of these *Flipgrid* videos is that parents and students may access them at any-time, anywhere, providing the learning flexibility needed during this time of uncertainty. Another benefit of the program is that students are able to send videos to their teachers as well, enabling them to respond to learning activities and remain connected with their teachers.

“The fact that we have this visual way to connect during this difficult time is such a blessing — to still be able to connect and learn together,” Mrs. Ray says.

Another blessing of this experience thus far has been the way it’s united the community spiritually. Though unable to physically attend Mass and receive

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STEWARDSHIP FOR EDUCATION: FOUR ST. VINCENT DE PAUL PARISH SENIORS RECEIVE SCHOLARSHIPS

Four St. Vincent de Paul Parish seniors are being chosen to each receive \$300 scholarships from our Knights of Columbus Council #8469.

Dan Pernicek has been working with his selection committee since mid-March to begin the selection process. Thirty-two letters were sent out to the high school seniors of our parish for them to apply. The deadline was March 22.

“The application is a form for them to fill out,” Dan says. “There is a short essay on why they chose their career field and why they should receive the scholarship.”

Once the application forms were received, Dan selected a committee of 12 Knights who volunteered in late March to review each application. There were four criteria that each committee member scored from 1 to 10. The criteria are Academics, Church, Civic, Financial Need. The scores were tabulated and the winners were determined by the highest scores.

The winners are announced in our bulletin. Those attending Seward High School are cited during Honors Night at Seward High School. However, the funds are disbursed once the winners submit their transcripts at the end of the first semester. They must have earned a minimum of

a 2.0 GPA on a 4.0 system for 12 or more semester hours.

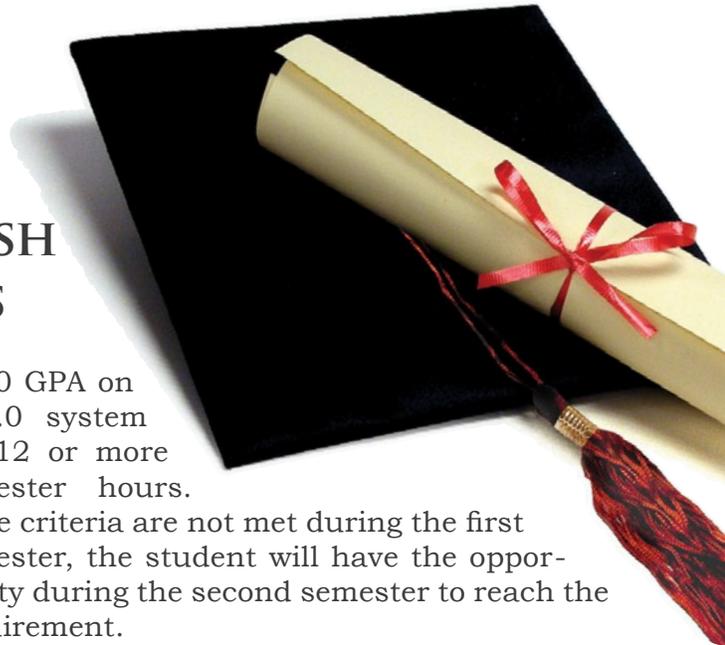
If the criteria are not met during the first semester, the student will have the opportunity during the second semester to reach the requirement.

The scholarships originated when the council initially gave \$250 to the Seward Community Scholarship Board who gave a K of C scholarship to a Seward High School Senior.

However, when Edward A. Svoboda was Grand Knight of the council, he wanted the council to award its own scholarships to our parish’s high school seniors, to include those who attended high schools other than Seward High School.

The four scholarships awarded are — Knights of Columbus Scholarship; Deceased Knights Memorial Scholarship; Edward A. Svoboda Scholarship; Michael A. Peery Scholarship.

Monies for the scholarships come from the monthly breakfasts prepared by the council and from the funds established by the Peery and Svoboda families.



If you would like additional information about the scholarships, please contact Dan Pernicek at dpernicek@farmersco-operative.com. If you would like information about joining the Knights of Columbus, please speak to any council member.

THE ROSARY: *Our Lady's Lasso*

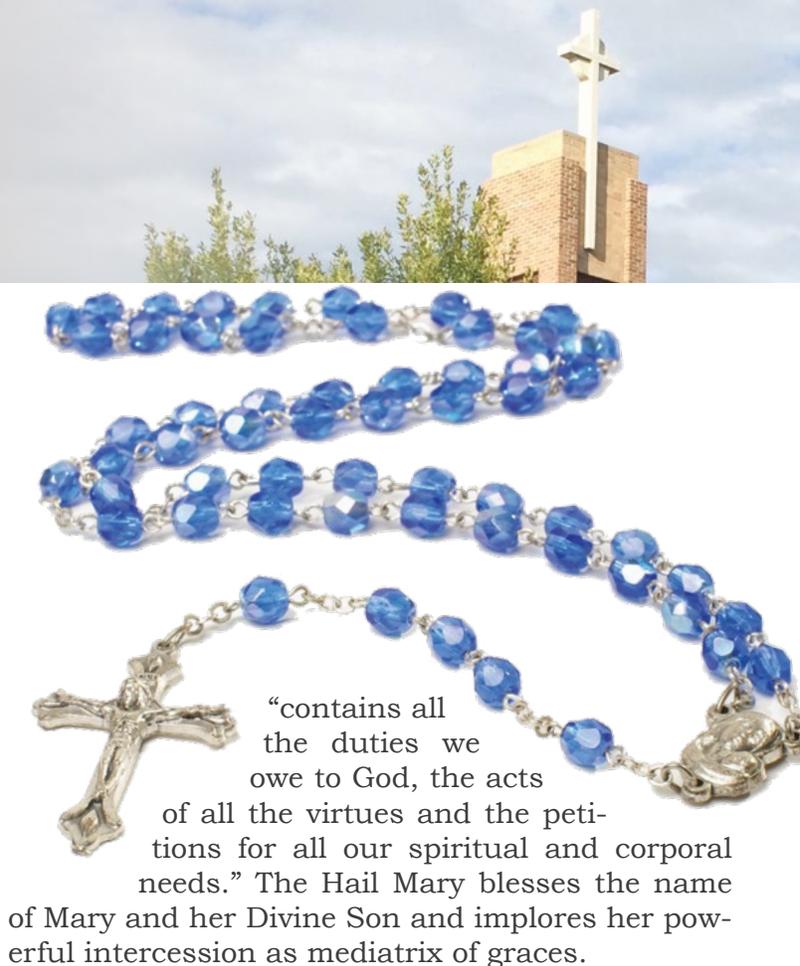
There was a priest who once said, “It is no coincidence that rosaries look like lassos, as Our Lady wraps them around lost souls and pulls them out of the depths of hell.”

This thought is comforting but provokes inquiry — what exactly is the Rosary, how does one pray it, and why should one pray it?

Since May is the month of Mary, this is a great time to consider the theology behind this intense spiritual weapon.

There are two putative origins of the Rosary. For many centuries, it was believed that the Blessed Virgin appeared to St. Dominic and exhorted him to encourage the use of the Angelic Salutation — or Hail Mary — for the conversion of souls and comfort of the afflicted. Modern scholarship traces the Rosary back to ninth century Irish monasticism. Monks would pray all 150 psalms or “psalters” every day, a form of prayer too complicated for uneducated laypeople without access to copies of Scripture. So many began reciting the Lord’s Prayer or the Angelic Salutation in response to each psalm, keeping count with pebbles or a knotted rope. Through many centuries, the Rosary evolved into three sets of five mysteries, each mystery consisting of 10 Angelic Salutations and one Lord’s Prayer recited while meditating upon the life, death or glory of Jesus Christ.

In *The Secret of the Rosary*, St. Louis de Montfort expounds the dynamics of the Rosary. The prayer consists of both vocal or exterior prayer, and meditative or interior prayer. The first vocal component of the Rosary, the Creed, is important because faith is “the foundation of all Christian virtues, of all eternal virtues, and also of all prayers that are pleasing to Almighty God.” The Lord’s Prayer is the “perfect prayer” to the God of heaven because it was authored by Christ, is free of all human limitations, and



“contains all the duties we owe to God, the acts of all the virtues and the petitions for all our spiritual and corporal needs.” The Hail Mary blesses the name of Mary and her Divine Son and implores her powerful intercession as mediatrix of graces.

But the Rosary is not simply a physical incantation. Vocal prayer is accompanied by contemplation of the mysteries of Christ’s life and the virtues of the Virgin Mary. It is by lifting the incorporeal soul in prayer that one quiets the passions, tastes the peace of Christ, marvels at His loving plans and promises, and grows in the desire to emulate Him and His sinless mother. Because the soul animates the body, a strengthened soul means nobility of action and a will that is commensurate with the will of God. As Louis de Montfort says, “The Rosary is a blessed blending of mental and vocal prayer by which we honor and learn to imitate the mysteries and the virtues of the life, death, passion and glory of Jesus and Mary.” The Rosary’s emphasis on both vocal and meditative prayer caters to man’s nature as an embodied soul — one’s entire being, both physical and spiritual, cries out to God in praise, repentance, thanksgiving, and supplication.

Thus, it is no surprise that the magisterium and countless saints have encouraged devotion to the Rosary. Pope St. John Paul II said of the prayer, “The Rosary is my favorite prayer, marvelous in its simplicity and its depth.” The late pontiff also added five more “luminous” mysteries to the Rosary to help the faithful meditate upon significant moments in Christ’s earthly ministry.



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SEPARATED BUT STILL CONNECTED *continued from page 5*

the sacraments, Mrs. Ray says that many parents are utilizing the daily live-streamed Mass at home with their children, using it to start off their day.

“I think this is really beautiful because it means we are all still connected on that spiritual level, as well, which is the most important level and the reason we all exist,” Mrs. Ray says. “Even though we can’t be there personally and receive Jesus in the way we long to, we can still partake in the Mass on some level. People are still attending their scheduled time for adoration, reminding us all that we can rely on God to get us through this.”

Though the timeline for restored normalcy is still uncertain, Mrs. Ray is confident that the overall experience will leave St. Vincent de Paul School stronger. Parents, students and teachers will each return with a tremendous sense of

gratitude — appreciating aspects of everyday living that they might have taken for granted previously. Teachers and parents will have a stronger connection than ever before. And we as an entire faith community will be strengthened by the ripples of kindness that Mrs. Ray says have appeared everywhere.

“I think this will be something that will pull our school together in a new way — that we will all be grateful to return to that peace that we have maybe taken for granted in the past,” Mrs. Ray says. “I think our students will be inspired to look at our school and learning in an entirely new way — while our teachers, who have been pushed to get more creative and teach in entirely new ways, help them learn things about them that they never even knew before.”

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.