

SAINT *Vincent de Paul*



CATHOLIC CHURCH | SEWARD, NEBRASKA

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NEW YEAR BRINGS OPPORTUNITIES FOR *Spiritual Growth and Rejuvenation*

There is something undeniably exciting about the hope and optimism that come with the beginning of a new year. Following the season of preparation during Advent and the joyous celebration of the birth of Christ, we are invited to pause once more and reflect upon our goals and dreams for the coming year. Here at St. Vincent de Paul, we will see Christ becoming the visual focal point of our church as remodeling begins and the tabernacle and crucifix are set at the center of the sanctuary. So, too, are we called to bring our focus back to Christ, fully centering our lives on Him in 2021.

Msgr. Robert Tucker views the new year as a particularly relevant time to take stock of our lives and begin a process of renewal.

"It's just natural for us to just look at what's happened over the last year and make plans for the new year," he says. "I think everybody wants their new year to be better than their last year, and we can ask Lord what He is calling us to do to make this year better. When we go into a new year,



As we celebrate Mary, the Mother of God, in January, it is a good time to reflect on ways to renew our faith in the new year.

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EXAMINING OUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF STEWARDSHIP

Every January, we all step forward into the New Year with new ideas, goals and resolutions. But after the initial sparkle of the New Year has faded, it can be easy to forget our once-ferve resolutions. However, we might find that it's a bit easier to keep our New Year's resolutions if we look a bit beyond our physical selves. By also involving our spiritual lives, as well as the lives of others, we can add a lot more meaning to our resolutions.

Renowned Catholic author Matthew Kelly says, "We're all trying to be better versions of ourselves," and that's basically what any resolution is about. Stewardship is essentially the same thing — if we embrace living a stewardship way of life, we become better versions of ourselves. We can use our time and talent to make improvements in our lives, in the lives of others, and in the life of the parish. It all comes down to one basic point — if we acknowledge that everything we have is a gift from God, then we are supposed to be good stewards of those gifts, use them for the benefit of others, and return our talents tenfold to the Lord.

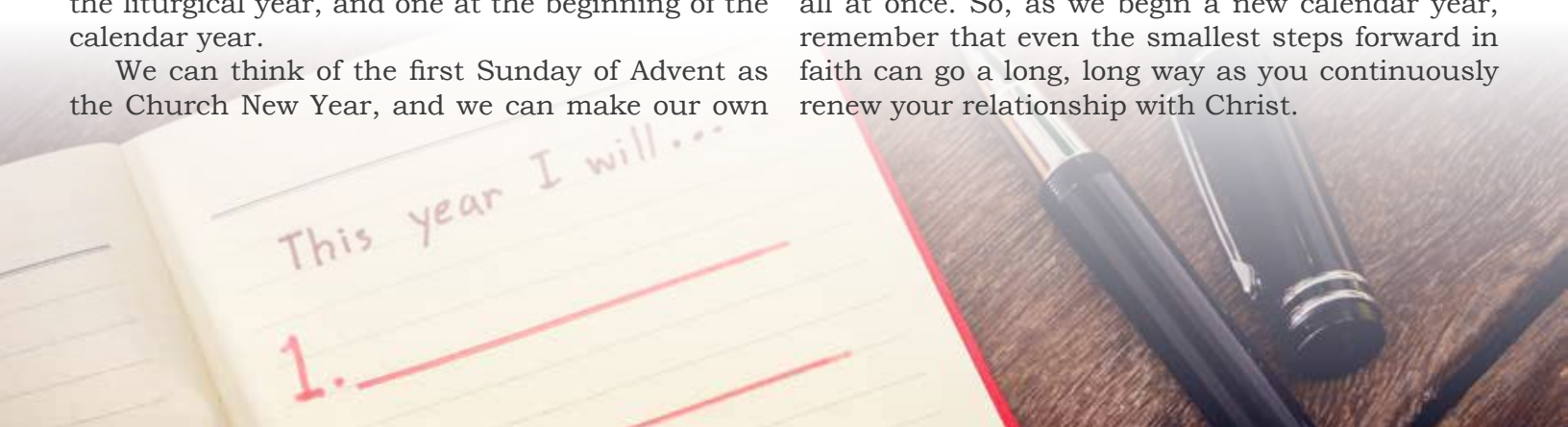
One idea to help incorporate stewardship into your New Year's resolutions is to make two distinct resolutions each year — one at the beginning of the liturgical year, and one at the beginning of the calendar year.

We can think of the first Sunday of Advent as the Church New Year, and we can make our own

spiritual resolutions at this special time each year. Then, for the new calendar year, we can make resolutions for our health and well-being. In both cases, we can commit to these promises much in the same way we make our commitments during our annual Stewardship Renewal. We can make these resolutions, write them down, and share them with someone. Once you've written it down and shared it, you are now holding yourself accountable.

We are both physical and spiritual beings. Taking care of the physical side of things is a good start, but if we ignore the spiritual side, what kind of progress are we truly making? Even if you already regularly pray, you can add five more minutes to your prayer time each day to take a step forward in your faith. Even if you read the Bible once a week, you can take a spiritual leap and make it twice a week. One way to make a good resolution is to consider joining or increasing your involvement in one of the parish's prayer, faith formation or outreach ministries.

Making resolutions requires us to truly reflect on the areas in our lives that we'd like to improve, while also ensuring that our priorities are in order. Remember, there is no need to take a giant leap all at once. So, as we begin a new calendar year, remember that even the smallest steps forward in faith can go a long, long way as you continuously renew your relationship with Christ.



JESUS 2021

Dear Parishioners,

Many saw the signs “Jesus 2020” in their neighborhood prior to the election. The signs communicate a known truth that Jesus is the only One that we can count on! Those signs give me the inspiration to say “Jesus 2021” should be our theme for this year.

As I was thinking about this letter for January, I wondered what I wrote about last year. I wrote about humility and trust in Jesus. Jesus referred to the Pharisees as “blind guides” and then told the Apostles how blessed they are to see Him. No one saw the events of 2020 coming, so everyone can claim to be blind. What helped you make it through 2020? We change the pronoun and say, “Who helped you make it through 2020?” Jesus is the answer to all of the questions of life.

Jesus is the only One who saw the events of 2020 coming, and He is the only One that had the answers to it. Jesus knows everything. He knows the past, the present and the future. If we study, we know the past, if we are wise, we can make good predictions about the future — yet, the only thing we know for sure is the present moment. Jesus is present everywhere, but the only place we can encounter Him is in the present moment. It is difficult to live in the present moment because we are not satisfied with the past and we worry about the future. Living in the present moment allows us to be with Jesus because He is there now and always. Living in the present with Jesus gives us the wisdom, courage and strength we need for the events

of the present. We are blind if we live in the present without Him, but with Him, we see and we hear the answers to the present.

The Scriptures tell us “the Word is near you, on your lips and in your heart.” The “Word” is Jesus, present in each moment of life longing to be in our heart and on our lips. “Many long to see, but do not see.” “Many long to hear, but do not hear.” Many long to see and hear, and fail because they live in the present moment without Jesus. I include myself in the “many” because there are times that I do not pray before acting. In choosing to act separate from prayer, I choose to be a “blind guide.” Uniting oneself with Jesus and then acting, we can say, we see and hear, and we are confidently doing the will of Jesus.

The only advice that I have for you is to pray daily, and pray more. Make Jesus your friend and place the sign “Jesus 2021” in your heart. Jesus is the answer, and He is our hope for a good year!

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Msgr. Robert Tucker
Pastor



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS *Celebrating Education and*

The last week in January is always an exciting time in Catholic schools across the country, as students and their teachers celebrate the annual Catholic Schools Week. Our own

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School students, faculty, staff and parents will celebrate from Jan. 31 to Feb. 5.

While this year's festivities may look a bit different due to ongoing COVID-19 precautions, Principal Denise Ray looks forward to celebrating the gift of Catholic education with the entire school community.

The week begins with a kick-off Mass on Sunday, Jan. 31. Mrs. Ray appreciates that St. Vincent de Paul students serve during the Mass.

"They get up there and don't even flinch or seem nervous," she says.

This year, parishioners will be provided with a small gift in gratitude for their support of the school. Mrs. Ray says that without their valuable support, the

school wouldn't be here.

"This is always a great way to start the week," she says. "We want to emphasize we are Catholic and we are proud of that."

On Monday of Catholic Schools Week, students learn about and celebrate vocations, and there is a Eucharistic procession. Mrs. Ray also wants to share faith stories from the seminarians so that students may learn how they followed their vocations.

For Tuesday, the students will celebrate our community by making something to share. Mrs. Ray says they will also have some interaction with their "grandpals," as part of the pen pal program between students and senior citizen parishioners, which was started this school year.

Wednesday is reserved for parents to come in and enjoy lunch and an activity, in thanks for their support of the school.

On Thursday, the staff will celebrate the students with a trip to the movie theatre. And finally, Friday will be a celebration



Keith and Nicki Wintz with their children Natalie, Sammi, Chloe and Matthew. Natalie and Sammi are graduates from St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School. Chloe and Matthew currently attend the school.

of teachers, staff and administrators. The day also includes a "dress comfortable" theme and teachers will serve at the Mass.

Keith and Nicki Wintz and their children celebrate their love for Catholic education all year, not just during Catholic Schools Week. Keith and Nicki's children, Natalie and Sammi, are graduates of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School, while Chloe and Matthew are currently attending.

"We love the fact that our kids



Registration for preschool, ages 3 to 5, will begin in February.

Kindergarten Roundup will be from 9 to 10:30 a.m. on Feb. 9. Students spend time in the classroom with several teachers and do an activity in the gymnasium. Parents spend time learning about St. Vincent de Paul School from Principal Denise Ray and Msgr. Tucker. There will also be breakfast, as well as time for questions and answers. For both programs, parents are welcome to call with questions or to set up a tour, at any time. Please call the school at 402-643-9525 with any questions, or to register your child for Kindergarten Roundup or preschool.



SCHOOLS WEEK: *Community Rooted in Faith*

experience a daily encounter with Jesus,” Nicki says. “What a gift to be able to begin every day with Mass! That gift then seeps into the classrooms where the teachers integrate His way, His truth and His life throughout the day.”

Keith and Nicki love being part of the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School community. They would encourage anyone

with children to consider all that the school has to offer.

“I would say St. Vincent’s is the place to be!” Nicki says. “We have small class sizes, positive and encouraging teaching staff and an amazing music program.”

Mrs. Ray is so proud of all the good work going on at St. Vincent de Paul. For the 2021-22 school year, the preschool program will

include a nature program with an outdoor classroom. While the classroom will be primarily for preschool, it will also be accessible to all grades.

“Here at the school, our mission is to make saints,” Mrs. Ray says. “We also want to give kids zeal for the faith, so they are proud to be Catholic. We want them to share Christ with anyone they meet.”

NEW YEAR OPPORTUNITIES *continued from front cover*

there are two things we need to look at when we set up resolutions — how can we better take care of the temple that God made us to be, both physically and spiritually? The Lord wants us to take care of ourselves so we can take care of others.”

With some parishioners isolating at home due to the COVID-19 crisis, Msgr. Tucker and Fr. Allan Phan are continuing to look for ways to keep the faithful connected to our parish and to Christ in the sacraments. Those who are open to visits from our priests will have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confession in their homes.

St. Vincent de Paul will offer several other options for parishioners who hope to delve more deeply into their faith this year. At the end of 2020, the parish gave out free copies of Matthew Kelly’s newest book, *I Heard God Laugh*. In addition, Msgr. Tucker will be hosting a special opportunity for adult faith formation online that will take participants through a study on two important church documents — *Gaudium et Spes* (the Church in the modern world) and *Lumen Gentium* (Light of the Nations). Children’s faith formation and our RCIA classes continue to meet in person, with about eight people expected to join the Catholic Church

at St. Vincent de Paul in 2021!

In addition to the home visits and faith formation on offer, there is, of course, a powerful tool for spiritual growth available to us at any time, in any place — prayer. This year, Msgr. Tucker invites parishioners to open their hearts to the Blessed Mother in a special way.

“One of the things we need to do is increase our devotion to the Blessed Mother,” he says. “It’s foundational in our life. A decade of the Rosary every day might be an option that would help people. One spiritual thing we should all be doing is increasing our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, because all graces flow through her. She is intimately involved in helping us to know and love her Son.”

Whether online or in person, participating in Masses, prayers and faith formation is a wonderful way to stay connected to both our parish community and our God. Msgr. Tucker hopes all the faithful at St. Vincent de Paul will be inspired by this special time of renewal to participate in the opportunities for spiritual growth offered by the parish, increase their devotion to the Blessed Mother, and rejuvenate their commitment to prayer and the sacraments.



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, Thomas was designated 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.

THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS: RAISING UP MANHOOD TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL



Knights presented a check to the school from our fish fry proceeds.

When Brandon Lindau joined the Catholic Church, he entered into the faith with a heart for service.

“I became Catholic about five years ago,” he says. “I joined the Knights of Columbus because I was asked to do so, and I was probably looking deep inside for a solid organization to put some roots down. Being asked to be the Grand Knight was, and still is, an honor. Just to have the trust and support of the council to lead this organization is definitely a tremendous honor!”

The Knights of Columbus is a fraternal service organization of men, founded under the principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. Our parish’s St. Vincent de Paul Council #8469 strives to live out the spirit of Blessed Fr. McGivney, a beacon of hope and charity.

“I really appreciate belonging to the Knights because of how the organization supports the Church and all it stands for,” Brandon says.

Regardless of the challenges in our nation today, the Knights of Columbus are still up and running the best that they can.

“We are still having our monthly meetings in the social hall, where we are able to remain socially distant from each other,” Brandon says. “Also, each day, the Knight State Executive Secretary sends out a prayer list, which I forward on to our members. It includes prayers from Knights who live all over the state. This is just a small way that we can still help our brother Knights during these times.”

Typical of the Knights of Columbus, members continue to overcome obstacles and reach out to others with God’s love.

“In September we held our first and only pancake breakfast since the pandemic hit,” Brandon says. “We decided to use this first one as a test run and not advertise in the local paper like we normally do. We were pleasantly surprised by the turnout. Our parish and community are really

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KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS *continued from page 7*

longing for human, face-to-face interaction. Not a lot of Knights could help, but like usual, everyone pulled together and we had a successful event. The hard work and dedication of all those Knights who helped with the breakfast really amazed me.”

As Brandon emphasizes, it’s so important that men’s groups like the Knights are there are to offer support as members navigate their own faith journeys.

“Men in the church really need to step up and take responsibility for what is going on around them,” he says. “We need to be the leaders of our domestic families and guide them in this journey

with Christ. We should set an example for our children and community on what it is to be a Christian man in these times. Our founder, Fr. McGivney was beatified just this past October. Everything he stood for is what all Catholic men should aspire to be.”

Normally, the Knights of Columbus organize and host the following charitable activities — fish fries during Lent; pancake breakfasts nine months of the year; the annual Tootsie Roll Drive to raise funds for people with intellectual disabilities; the One Rose, One Life campaign for the unborn; and the Knights Free Throw Contest.



If you would like more information on how to join the Knights of Columbus, please visit www.kofc.org/join, or contact Brandon Lindau at 402-499-8103 or grandknight8469@gmail.com. New members can input their information and the council will be notified so that they can contact them and finish the initiation process.

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.