

# SAINT *Vincent de Paul*



CATHOLIC CHURCH | SEWARD, NEBRASKA

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## BIBLE STUDIES Offer a Valuable Chance to *DIVE INTO SCRIPTURE* and *SHARE IN FELLOWSHIP*

Throughout the season of Lent, our St. Vincent de Paul community was blessed with many opportunities to gather in the Lord's name. Two such examples are the Bible study groups who gathered to grow in faith and study Scripture. Parishioners Tess Sousek and Camille Wanetka led the Augustine Institute's "Forgiven: The Transforming Power of Forgiveness," which was offered for women during two different sessions. Lori Wehrs led an Emmaus Institute study on the themes of the Eucharist throughout Scripture for both men and women.

The "Forgiven" series, through FORMED.org, uses videos to explore Scripture and reveal the grace and healing offered in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Camille enjoyed helping guide people through Scripture, to, ultimately, learn more about Christ.

"Bible study can help us know the life, promises, and love of Christ," Camille says. "I have had the opportunity to be around some amazing people who inspire and encourage me in my spiritual life."

For Lori, the opportunity to learn right along with the rest of the group was a great one.



*A group gathered for Bible study this spring.*

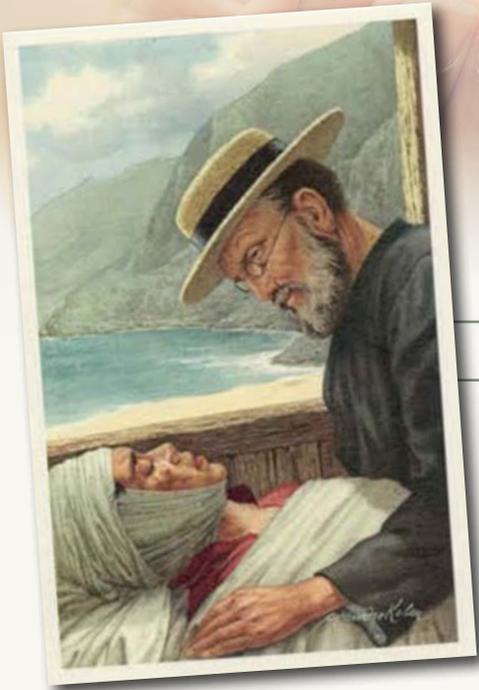
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REMEMBERING

# St. Damien of Molokai

ON HIS FEAST DAY, MAY 10



When Joseph de Veuster — who later received the name Damien in religious life — was born in Belgium, in 1840, few in Europe had any understanding or knowledge of leprosy, or Hansen’s disease. But upon his death at the age of 49, people all over the world knew about this disease. Just as importantly, they also understood the role that human compassion held in softening the ravages of this disease.

Having quit school to work on the family farm at the age of 13, Joseph entered the

Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary six years later. When his brother, a priest in the same congregation, was too ill to go to the Hawaiian Islands as assigned, Damien volunteered in his place. In May 1864, just two months after his arrival, Damien was ordained a priest in Honolulu and assigned to the island of Hawaii.

In 1873, Damien made his way to the Hawaiian government’s leper colony on the island of Molokai, which had been established seven years earlier. His first project, building the Parish Church of St. Philomena, was carried out so that the people would be able to learn the Catholic faith and have a place to worship. As part of a team of four chaplains who took the assignment in Molokai for three months each year, Damien soon volunteered to remain on a per-

manent basis, caring for the physical, medical and spiritual needs of those in the colony. He would eventually become their most effective advocate in obtaining promised government support. The settlement soon had new houses and a new church, school and orphanage.

Damien contracted Hansen’s disease, and on April 15, 1889, he died of its complications. As requested, he was buried in Kalaupapa. However, in 1936, the Belgian government succeeded in having his body moved to Belgium. In 1995, after his beatification, part of Damien’s body was returned to his beloved Hawaiian brothers and sisters. He was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 11, 2009. His symbols are a tree and a dove, and he is the patron of outcasts, and people with leprosy, HIV and AIDS.

# PENTECOST

THE SPIRIT CALLS US TO A LIFE OF STEWARDSHIP

Dear Parishioners,

**O**n the day of Pentecost, people in Jerusalem heard the sound of a driving wind as the Holy Spirit came down on the Apostles. The sound attracted thousands of people to a place just outside of the Jerusalem temple. The Apostles came out and began to preach about Jesus, His resurrection, the forgiveness of sins and the new life He has to give. The Apostles were exuberant as they spoke, and some asked if they drank too much “new wine.” The Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, were full of joy. The joy of the Gospel flowed out of every word they spoke. That day, thousands accepted the faith and received baptism. The Church started that day with a multitude of converts. This is the power of the Holy Spirit!

The joyful season of Easter concludes with the feast of Pentecost. Last year, the real joy of Easter disappeared as people longed to attend Mass and to receive Communion, but a pandemic kept them away. The use of technology brought the Mass into homes, but it is not the same as being physically present. The Bishops of Nebraska joined to announce that this Pentecost, the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday returns. Joyfully, we return to the celebration of Mass on Pentecost, celebrating the beginning of the Church and a new beginning in our own times.

I believe the announcement brings a message of a “new beginning.” There is much excitement around our Parish this time of year, as we celebrate First Communion, Confirmation, Mother’s Day, Graduation and we can be together to enjoy these celebrations. The excitement in the air is very similar to the new life the Holy Spirit gave to the Apostles. The question to answer is, “How do we use this new life, this new beginning?”

Jesus is the giver of this new life and love, and we are the recipients of these gifts. This new life comes

from the Holy Spirit. Armed with the Holy Spirit, Who is the love that pours out from the Father and the Son, Jesus sends us as His agents. The pillars of stewardship — hospitality, prayer, formation and service — are our way of engaging the Spirit in our daily lives. In a practical way, hospitality opens our doors to others, prayer lifts others to God, formation enlightens our minds with the mysteries of faith, and in service we give ourselves to others. A more traditional way of saying the same thing is that the Spirit engages us to live the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Jesus sends us out to our own neighborhood as members from our Church to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant and pray for the living and the dead. We find ourselves doing these things for our family, friends and neighbors, but Jesus says, welcome the stranger! In Antioch the Apostles said, they would know we are Christians in the way we love one another. Loving everyone, including the stranger, is the movement of the Spirit and a life of stewardship.

During this month of May, exercise the pillars of stewardship with everyone you meet. The new life of the Spirit, of the Easter season is guiding us to a new life, building community and sharing the love of Jesus with all. God Bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

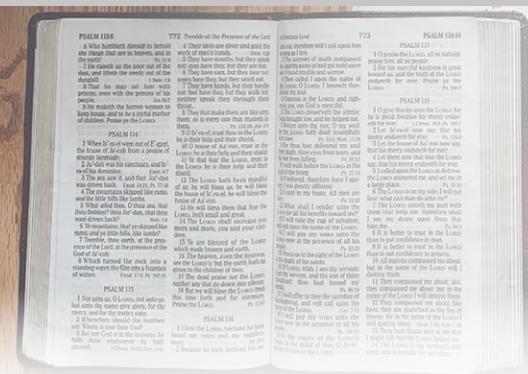


Msgr. Robert Tucker  
Pastor



# CLARE WILTON

# Reflections



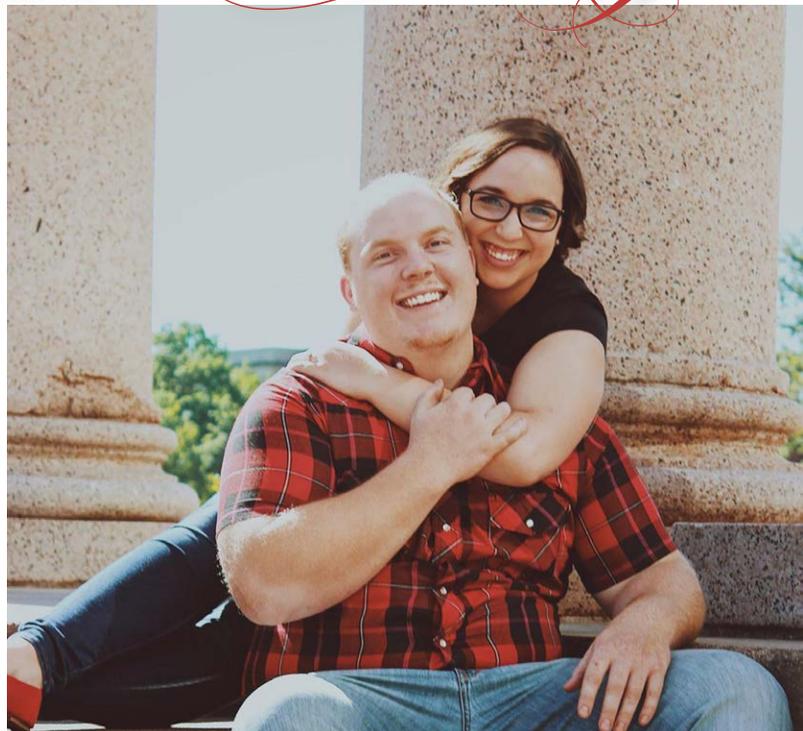
Sometimes, God puts just the right people in our lives to help us along the path He has set out for us. For Clare Wilton, those people were her fiancé, Jake Bierbaum, and a close college friend who shares her name, Clare. Through these two relationships, Clare was introduced to the Catholic faith and many of its traditions. Eventually, the beauty of the faith led her to become a full member of the Church!

Clare was raised and confirmed in the Lutheran faith but was never very active in church life. When she started dating Jake, she noticed that he would attend Catholic Mass every Sunday. She even went with him a couple of times but didn't feel very comfortable with the unfamiliar liturgy. Then, as a student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Clare was once again presented with the opportunity to visit a Catholic church.

"My friend Clare and I had a night class together every week, and we would walk back to the dorm together," Clare says. "Every night, we stopped at a corner where you could go on to the dorm or turn to go to the Newman Center. My friend would say, 'I'm going to pray for a bit, do you want to come with me?'" The first few times I said 'no.' I don't know what changed my mind, but one night I decided to go."

Clare soon fell into the habit of accompanying her friend to the Newman Center to pray for a few minutes after their night class. Sometimes, her friend would stay for the evening Mass, and soon enough, Clare found herself doing the same. A few weeks later, she discovered Eucharistic Adoration.

"The Newman Center does a beautiful adoration service at night, with candles set up and instrumental music playing," Clare says. "So I went in with



*Clare Wilton and Jake Bierbaum will be married at the end of this month.*

my friend and she got up to go to confession, and it just hit me that this was the most beautiful moment I'd ever had in my entire life. It just showed me the beauty of the Catholic faith and the fact that all these college kids, instead of partying on a Friday night, came to be with Jesus. The next year when they had the same adoration service, I invited Jake and his friends to come, and it was just this beautiful moment."

Inspired to learn more about the Catholic faith, Clare enrolled in the RCIA process here at

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## ON HER JOURNEY TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

St. Vincent de Paul in September 2019. She had many questions about the faith and grappled with a few topics such as purgatory and confession. Approaching the RCIA classes as she would a college course, Clare arrived every Monday evening armed with a pen and notebook.

“I wrote down everything Fr. Phan said,” says Clare. “Now I have this amazing record of everything we talked about, with my random questions and comments on the side. I stayed almost every week after class and just asked questions and questions — anything that had come to me during the week. Just watching Fr. Phan talk about the Catholic faith is absolutely beautiful, because he cares so deeply and knows so much.”

Due to COVID-19 church closures, the RCIA candidates were received fully into the Church two at a time. Clare was confirmed on Easter 2020, with her parents, Jake — who served as her RCIA sponsor — and his parents and grandparents. The intimate Mass with loved ones was a truly special way to come into the Church.

At the time, no one could have guessed that it would be two months before the church could reopen. Clare profoundly missed being able to receive the Eucharist during that time, but she and Jake began coordinating with one another to watch the same Mass livestream “together” each weekend, even while Clare was 30 minutes away in Lincoln. Clare also appreciated having more time for personal prayer and Scripture reading during a year in which the world slowed down.

As the country begins to emerge from a global pandemic, even more, life changes are in store for Clare. In addition to her upcoming wedding, she

also has her December graduation from the University of Nebraska on the horizon. In the future, she hopes to serve our parish community as a lector and possibly a cantor. Giving back by serving others has always been important to Clare, and she looks forward to becoming more engaged in parish life here at St. Vincent de Paul.

Thankful for the many blessings that have come her way on this journey to the Catholic Church, Clare would encourage anyone with an interest in the faith to come to see what our Church is all about!

“I would suggest writing down your questions,” Clare says. “Do your research, but also don’t be afraid to talk to Monsignor and Fr. Phan. It can be scary to ask someone these questions, but they won’t judge you and they’ll let you know what they know. I also know that going to Mass can be uncomfortable in the beginning — don’t let that stop you from seeing the beauty that is in the Mass. St. Vincent de Paul is a welcoming place.”

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# CONFIRMATION BRINGS *OUTPOURING OF GRACE* TO OUR FIFTH-GRADERS

**M**onday, May 3 will certainly be a very special day for our fifth-graders here at St. Vincent de Paul Parish. At 7 p.m. on that day, Bishop James D. Conley of the Diocese of Lincoln confirmed them with the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was gifted to the apostles on Pentecost. As they were confirmed, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the grace they received at Baptism was increased and deepened.

“The Catechism of the Catholic Church also states that Confirmation ‘unites us more firmly to Christ,’ and ‘increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us,’” says Carmen Brown, CCD-GP Coordinator. “The Catechism additionally states that ‘Confirmation... gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ.’”

The Sacrament of Confirmation in our diocese is typically given when children are in the fifth grade, but preparation for Confirmation — for any sacrament — begins at a much younger age.

“Parents are the first and foremost religious educators of their children,” Carmen says. “With that in mind, the process of working towards receiving any sacrament truly begins as little children in the home.”

As children attend Mass regularly with their parents, they learn about the beauty and significance of their Catholic faith. They learn this further by serving others, and by praying together at home



*Bishop James D. Conley and co-celebrants prepare to confirm the 2020 group of fifth-graders.*

— for example, at meals, before bedtime, or during a family Rosary.

“This training and awareness are strengthened by the child’s formal training when they begin classes in a Catholic school or a parish religious ed program,” Carmen says. “The Catholic community becomes the child’s larger ‘family’ and support, as they grow in faith.”

Part of this important support is found in the child’s Confirmation sponsor, whose duties go beyond attending the Confirmation ceremony. Confirmation sponsors are often Catholic family members chosen by the children and their parents, such as a

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“Being confirmed to me means being a child of God for the rest of my life. The preparation has helped me to learn more about my faith and brought me closer in my relation with God.” — *A St. Vincent de Paul Confirmation student*

# CONFIRMATION

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grandparent or sibling. The sponsor may also be their baptismal sponsor or a close friend. The sponsor is considered a “spiritual guide” and should be selected after careful thought and prayer.

“There are necessary guidelines that aid them in choosing a sponsor,” Carmen says. “These include — the sponsor must be willing to help encourage the candidate throughout their lives to remain faithful to their baptismal promise, to practice their Catholic faith, to follow the Ten Commandments and the Precepts of the Church.”

Church law outlines specific qualifications for sponsors — they must be practicing Catholics, for example, attending Mass regularly; at least 16 years old; have themselves received First Communion and been confirmed; if married, the marriage needs to be recognized in the Catholic Church. Parents cannot be a sponsor for their own children, but there are certain circumstances in which they may stand in as a proxy.

As our fifth-graders have prepared to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, they have come to truly appreciate what this sacrament means to their relationship with God.

“Being confirmed to me means being a child of God for the rest of my life,” one of the students says. “The preparation has helped me to learn more about my faith and brought me closer in my relationship with God.”

“It means I’m closer to God and closer to going to heaven to be with Him,” says another student. “I’m ready! My preparation has helped me understand our faith more because we have gone over way more this year.”



*The Confirmation candidates, sponsors and parents join in prayer during the 2020 Confirmation ceremony.*



*Bishop James D. Conley anoints one of our Confirmation candidates with the holy chrism during the 2020 Confirmation.*



*If you would like more information about our CCD program, please call Carmen Brown at 402-643-3521, ext. 106.*



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(402) 643-3421 | stvincentseward.org

## BIBLE STUDIES *continued from front cover*

“We looked at passages from the Old Testament and saw how they point to and were fulfilled in Jesus, specifically in the Eucharist,” Lori says.

Lori had previously participated in several Emmaus Institute studies in Lincoln. This inspired her to lead a study herself, and she wanted to bring this to the parishioners of St. Vincent de Paul.

Both of the studies were not only a chance to grow in faith, but they also offered fellowship in Christ. Camille and Lori both feel blessed by all those they have met and interacted with during the sessions.

It is a commonly held misconception that Catholics don’t study the Bible as much as our other friends in Christ — but Lori believes this is

changing as more people hunger for Scripture.

“Scripture is such an important part of our faith,” she says. “God reveals Himself in His Word. We can’t fully know Him unless we experience Him through His Word. It can seem daunting until you start. I think it’s easier if you do that in some sort of a study.”

As our faith is meant to be shared in community, Camille and Lori say the studies were a great avenue to do just that. People have gotten to know others and found encouragement from sharing with others in the group. Camille and Lori look forward to hosting future Bible studies and hope to expand the studies to more people and cover more topics.

Please refer to the bulletin and parish website at [www.stvincentseward.org](http://www.stvincentseward.org) for information on future Bible study opportunities at St. Vincent de Paul.

## 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.