



# Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## Gather with Friends for a Delicious Meal at the Annual Spring Dinner on April 18

We all know winter in North Dakota can last a pretty long time. But when the snow begins to melt and the flowers start to bloom, that means brighter and warmer days are ahead. So this spring, let's be sure we don't miss an opportunity to enjoy a meal together at Ascension's annual Spring Dinner!

Save your appetites for turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, corn, coleslaw, and cranberries — all served to you while you relax at your table. In addition to the great food, this is a valuable opportunity for building community while financially supporting our parish. This year's Spring Dinner will be held on Sunday, April 18, from 4 to 7 p.m. in the Community Room.

Margie Frank has worked with the parish staff, serving as the Spring Dinner Co-Chair for more than five years. She helps in a variety of areas, from volunteer assignments to putting together the table centerpieces. "I enjoy working with the staff to put this on," Margie says. "Everyone does their part and it is a lot of fun."

People come from surrounding parishes and the greater Bismarck community to enjoy the meal while supporting Ascension. But, as Margie says, the most important part of the event is building community.

"It just warms my heart on the day of the dinner when I see the community we have here," she says.



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## WINDOW 8: *St. Frances Xavier Cabrini*

THIS IS THE EIGHTH IN A 12-PART SERIES ON OUR STAINED GLASS WINDOWS IN ASCENSION CATHOLIC CHURCH.

**S**t. Frances Xavier Cabrini was born in 1850 in Italy. She founded the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She was as resourceful as she was prayerful, finding people who would donate what she needed in money, time, labor and support. She and her sisters wanted to be missionaries in China — she visited Rome to obtain an audience with Pope Leo XIII. The pope told Frances to go “not to the East, but to the West” to New York rather than to China as she had expected. She was to help the thousands of Italian immigrants already in the United States and was canonized as an American saint. Mother Cabrini founded 67 institutions dedicated to caring for the poor, the abandoned, the uneducated and the sick. In the window, we see right below Mother Cabrini the depiction of the dove with the olive branch, symbolizing a journey along with a sense of hope. The Sacred Heart is above her head depicting her ardent desire to serve as Christ served.

For St. Frances Xavier Cabrini (Mother Cabrini), prayer was her strength and source of peace. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that "prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God... In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit" (CCC, 2559, 2565). Mother Cabrini stated, “Prayer is powerful! It fills the earth with mercy, it makes the Divine clemency pass from generation to generation; right along the course of the centuries wonderful works have been achieved through prayer.”

She lived out her faith in the immense charity work she did. She said, “Do not be satisfied with loving God by yourselves alone; make all those around you love him also, and pray that everyone will love Him.” This mirrors Paul's same plea when he urges us in his First Letter to Timothy (2:1), "I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone." As we reflect on this window of Mother Cabrini, we can meditate on the following questions: What are my favorite ways to pray? For what or whom do I pray for most often? How has God answered this prayer? How can I develop my prayer life more intently?

This window was chosen on request of one of the benefactors of the windows in honor of their daughter who was named Cabrini.

Let us pray in the words of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, "Fortify me with the grace of Your Holy Spirit and give Your peace to my soul that I may be free from all needless anxiety, solicitude and worry. Help me to desire always that which is pleasing and acceptable to You so that Your will may be my will. Amen."



A Letter from our Pastor

# Celebrating Christ's Resurrection

Dear Parishioners,

How did you feel at the end of the Palm Sunday Mass? You may not have noticed, but there was an abrupt shift of tone in that liturgy. It began with great joy, as we celebrated Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to the acclamation of the crowds. But then the mood shifted to sorrow, despair even, when the Passion Gospel was read, for we heard the shouts of "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" from those same crowds a few days later.

Palm Sunday, of course, was the beginning of Holy Week, the most important week in the Christian year. The confusion of conflicting moods is spread through the week, especially during the Easter Triduum — from sundown Holy Thursday to sundown Easter Sunday.

Holy Thursday offers us the glorious Mass of the Lord's Supper celebrating the institution of the Eucharist before we pass to the sadness of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The next day brings us the Good Friday Liturgy of the Passion with our recognition of what our sins did to the Incarnate Son of God. Then, after a day of waiting as we mourn Jesus' burial and repose in the tomb, we celebrate His victory over sin, Satan and death at the Easter Vigil on Saturday night or at the Masses the next day. If we have participated in all the main services of the Triduum, we arrive at Sunday evening exhausted but joyful.

This year, Palm Sunday fell on the final Sunday of March, and we observe Holy Week and Easter Sunday early in April. That means we will spend most of April in the Easter Season, a period filled with joy and thanksgiving. Our gladness comes not only because Christ rose from the dead, but also because we benefit from it. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§654) puts it, "The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life."

In other words, Christ's Resurrection is the source of our own future resurrection. St. Paul wrote about it to the Romans in the following words (Rom 6:5): "For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection."

Eternal life in union with Christ — a hope for a new life beginning now and extending on into heaven — is the result of Jesus' Resurrection. What greater grounds for thanksgiving can there be than this Easter hope? We should sing with joy about this promise from God!

What's more, Paul also wrote (Col 3:1-2): "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth."

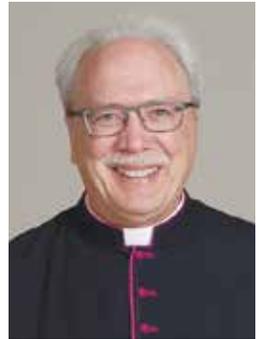
Jesus' Resurrection and His promise of a new life for us mean that we need to live in conformity with our status as adopted children of God.

And how do we show our joy and our gratitude to God for this amazing gift He has given us? We join in worship and praise God by word and song. We share the Good News of Jesus' victory over death with our family, friends and neighbors. And we offer back to the Lord a portion of the time, talent and treasure He has entrusted to us. Yes, the Easter message that we share in the benefits of Christ's Resurrection is the ultimate foundation for all Christian stewardship.

The Lord is risen, alleluia.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten  
Pastor



# Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## YOUTH FAITH FORMATION CATECHISTS

### SERVE AS STEWARDS OF OUR FAITH

Ever since Blane Schriock first became a catechist, a refreshing new journey of faith, hope, and love opened up for him, and his life took on a whole new meaning.

“When I first became involved in faith formation, I was in early high school, and I didn't even know the Catholic faith well myself,” he says. “However, I found that when you teach the faith, you come to know it yourself. As you evangelize and teach the youth, you also evangelize and teach yourself. I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't taught catechism — I wouldn't have either the degree or the job I have.”

Years after he first made that “leap of faith” and began teaching catechism, Blane is now reaping the fruits of his efforts and coordinating our parish's Youth Faith Formation catechists as our Director of Faith Formation. Thankfully, he understands firsthand from experience the unique value that catechesis can have in a young person's life.

“Our catechists are essential because, without them, the faith life of the Church cannot be taught or shared with others who do not know it,” Blane says. “In this day and age, it can be hard for people to come to know about the Catholic faith solely from their families, because their families may not even be going to church regularly. I realize that the hour the children spend in Faith Formation class may be the only hour they spend learning about the faith all week.”

Blane believes that being a faithful catechist means being a faithful steward of the truth of Catholicism, and sharing it with others. Ultimately, growing in stewardship means growing closer to Our Lord and His Blessed Mother, while bringing others along with you.

“In order to be good stewards and servants,



*Vocation Directors give a talk on the priesthood and consecrated religious life to Faith Formation students at Ascension.*

you have to have love, but you can't love if you don't know what or whom you are loving,” Blane says. “Our mission as catechists is to have the children know what and whom to love, so they can serve well.”

Overall, Blane has been deeply pleased with how well the Youth Faith Formation program has been coming along this year.

“I really enjoy working with the young people, and teaching them new faith-based concepts and ideas,” Blane says. “I especially appreciate our new curriculum, the Faith and Life series by Ignatius Press. Its chapter lessons are shorter, which leaves more time for discussion and activities. It encourages the children to ask

questions about what they are learning, and not just listen to us teach them. They have been receiving it very well!”

Looking forward, Blane has some aspirations when it comes to our Youth Faith Formation catechesis process.

“I am really hoping to get the youth ministry underway,” Blane says. “I am hoping to build community among the young people, and help them build up their personal relationships with Christ.”

Michael Jochim, who currently serves as a catechist for our fifth-grade students, finds that being involved in this ministry gives him an ideal way to make an impact on our parish children.

“Three years ago, I began teaching my daughter, Felicity's, third-grade Faith Formation class, and I have been a catechist ever since,” Michael says. “I have done some sports coaching, and I felt that running a class for an hour can't be too different than that, so I thought I would give it a try! It has given me a great opportunity to spend time with my daughter and get to know her friends at church.”



## TH FOR YOUNG PARISHIONERS

To those who would like to volunteer to be a catechist but are hesitant, Blane offers some excellent advice.

“The time commitment is only about an hour, or an hour and 15 minutes on Wednesday evenings,” he says. “A lot of people aren't sure if they can help with Youth Faith Formation because they are afraid they don't know enough information. We have training programs before the year begins to help our catechists prepare for what they will be doing. I would encourage them to at least try the training, and see if they feel called to be a catechist afterward.”

For more information on how to become a catechist, please contact Blane Schriock at the parish office at 701-223-3606 or email him at [bschriock@ascensionbismarck.org](mailto:bschriock@ascensionbismarck.org). Please refer to future parish bulletins for further details on Youth Faith Formation meeting times and opportunities.

## Growing in Faith Through the Parish Mission

Dr. Chris Burgwald, the Director of Adult Discipleship & Evangelization for the Diocese of Sioux Falls, S.D., recently gave a presentation on "Strengthening our Faith when Stormy." Deacon John Paul Martin led us in Eucharistic Adoration and prayer prior to each talk. The first day of the Mission, the Ladies of Ascension served a delicious and free meatball supper to all those who stayed afterwards. It was a beautiful event enjoyed by all. Recordings of all three talks are available on our livestream page, found at [www.ascensionbismarck.org](http://www.ascensionbismarck.org) — just click on "play" and then go to "previous broadcasts." They are definitely worth watching!



## Upcoming Events

**Holy Thursday, April 1** — Mass at 7 p.m., followed by adoration until 10 p.m.

**Good Friday, April 2** — 12 p.m. Liturgy; 3 p.m. showing of *The Passion of Christ in the Community Room*; 5:30 p.m. Stations of the Cross

**Holy Saturday, April 3** — Easter Vigil Mass at 9 p.m.

**Easter Sunday, April 4** — Mass Times at 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m.

**Parish Spring Dinner** — Sunday, April 18, serving from 4-7 p.m.

**Second-Grade Parent/Child Retreat** — Wednesday, April 21, between 4-7 p.m.

**Ninth-Grade Confirmation Retreat in Medora** — Saturday, April 24 and Sunday, April 25

**Dining in Faith (meal for families)** — Wednesday, April 28, serving from 4:45-6:45 p.m.

**First Holy Communion** — Saturday, May 1, at 5 p.m. Mass

# Ascension

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## Embracing Opportunities for Formation, Reflection and Fellowship

BY JOE SCHON, SEMINARIAN

The month of February was busy and difficult for me. Schoolwork increased as I settled into the semester, I had to begin thinking about what to do for Lent, and the formators started to have more responsibilities and higher expectations for us seminarians. However, times of struggle call for stretching and growth, and I cannot wait to see what fruits will come out of the month of February.

The Super Bowl was on the first weekend of February, so we had a big seminary-wide party with a few postgame wrestling matches. The next weekend was a free weekend, which means that there are no seminary events planned so that the seminarians can spend some time outside the seminary. Many others and I decided to stay at the seminary to get work done and spend time in fraternity with each other.

Lent came very quickly for me. For my larger penance, I decided that I would get eight hours of sleep every night, along with other ways of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. That weekend we had a

morning of silence with a talk. It was nice to take a step back from the busyness of life for those few hours.

That Sunday, some seminarians decided to get up at 2 a.m. to play a prank on the whole seminary — they took all of the tables and chairs out of the refectory and replaced them with lounge chairs and couches from our common room. The photo shows what the refectory looked like for a few days.

The next Monday through Wednesday, our vocations director, Fr. Dosch, visited us. The other Bismarck seminarians and I had a wonderful time with him during that time. As the weather started getting warmer, the seminary was able to play some more sports outside. I have played a lot of soccer and football the last two weeks. Finally, the whole seminary visited a D.C. parish for Sunday Mass — they were very hospitable to us.

I am praying for you all. Please pray for me and my brother seminarians!



# Young Parishioner *Addison Miller* Experiences Spiritual Rewards of Serving God and Parish

**D**uring a World Youth Day 2013 address, Pope Francis spoke to millions of young Catholics who had gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. As he stated to the large gathering of youth in attendance, “You too, dear young people, can be joyful witnesses of His love, courageous witnesses of His Gospel, carrying to this world a ray of His light.” The pope’s message reminds us of the importance of encouraging young people to participate fully in our faith. Here at Ascension, parishioner Addison Miller is proving how true these words can be!

Addison, 14, serves our parish by helping with Faith Formation classes. She began assisting in the first-grade classroom last year, and although she is currently in the midst of a busy freshman year at Bismarck High School, she is helping with the kindergarten class this year.

As the oldest of four children who likes spending time with younger kids, volunteering with our Faith Formation classes has been a good fit for Addison’s interests and talents. She enjoys working with the kindergartners and finds that she is often learning right alongside them.

“I just thought that sometimes the teachers need a little help with younger kids,” she says of her decision to serve in this ministry. “It’s nice to learn their



*Addison Miller (center) with her sisters, Maggie (left) and Averi (right)*

perspective and what they see. When I was their age, I don’t remember everything I did in Faith Formation, so it’s nice to relearn things with them. Helping them also helps me learn better.”

While Addison’s studies keep her busy — not to mention her participation on the high school track and basketball teams — she tries to take advantage of the opportunities Ascension provides for our youth to dig a little more deeply into the faith. One youth group meeting that was particularly memorable for Addison took place when some religious sisters came to

speak about their vocation and presented a song about religious life set to the tune of the popular “Despacito”!

Addison has also participated in two trips organized by the parish, including one to the RiseUp youth conference in Minnesota. There, she enjoyed learning more about the Catholic faith and spending time in prayer.

As a high schooler, Addison understands how challenging it can be for today’s teens to turn away from daily distractions and make time for their faith.

“I feel like many teens don’t care or don’t pay attention, or only go to things because their parents make them,” she says. “Then when they’re there, they are just on their phones and not learning. I tell myself to put the phone down and listen, because it’s always fun to learn stuff, and to hear what your friends have to say and how they see things, too. I want to learn more about Jesus, and it’s nice to learn other perspectives.”

Having experienced the great rewards of giving of her time and talent to the church, Addison would encourage other young parishioners to consider doing the same. Many thanks to Addison Miller for her service to our Faith Formation program — she is truly the witness of Christ’s love and light that Pope Francis exhorts all of our youth to be!



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## Spring Dinner *continued from front cover*

Margie, who also sings in the choir and serves as a cantor, had never considered herself much of a leader. But several years ago, Jan Sitter asked her to help lead the Spring Dinner. Margie wasn't sure at first, but she is thankful she said "yes" to this service opportunity — it is one that she has come to enjoy immensely.

"Being a Co-Chair didn't sound as scary," she says. "Plus, Jan had really good notes to follow, so that helped."

As Margie points out, sometimes people need to be invited to become involved in a ministry — Jan saw a talent in Margie that she didn't see in herself.

"Some people need to be invited," Margie says. "They are just waiting for that little nudge."

Besides serving the Lord, Margie says serving

in a ministry is a great way to get to know people. And, like a family, we all need to do our part at Ascension.

"If you don't get involved with anything, you really don't feel like you belong," Margie says. "You have to do your part to make it a great place."

Please join us for the Spring Dinner in the Community Room from 4 to 7 p.m. on Sunday, April 18. Since we couldn't gather last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we very much look forward to being together this year!

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### LITURGY SCHEDULE

**Saturday**, 5:00 p.m. | **Sunday**, 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m.

**Monday-Friday**, 8:00 a.m. | **Holy Days**: 8:00 a.m., 7:00 p.m.

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*Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.*