

# Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## The Parish Finance Council:

Ensuring the Good Stewardship of Our Treasure

When Les and Ann Gasal moved to Bismarck about six years ago, they visited staff at Ascension and left that meeting knowing this was the place for them. With Les having been a bank president in Sutton, Neb., it didn't take long for staff to ask him to join the Finance Council. He's been involved ever since.

"The staff made us feel so at home," Les says. "We realized this must be a very well-run parish."

The Code of Canon Law states that each parish must have a Finance Council. At Ascension, the Finance Council serves as an advisor to Msgr. Jim Braaten in all financial matters.

"Msgr. Braaten does an excellent job of managing the church in a holy way," Les says.

All of the Finance Council members have some kind of financial background. Members assist with auditing functions, reviewing financial policies, overseeing costs for maintenance and remodel work, setting up budgets for parish events, working with parish budgets, and much more. They are responsible to make sure all financial matters are handled responsibly. It's important work, which Les doesn't take lightly.

"I enjoy working with such a qualified group," Les says. "What I enjoy about this council is the people I get to work with."

Finance Council members were concerned when the COVID-19 pandemic first started. They wondered how the collection would be affected.



*Les Gasal (pictured with his wife, Ann) enjoys using his talents to serve on the Finance Council.*

July 2021

*Inside*

- 2 Window 11: St. John the Evangelist
- 3 Stewardship Helps Us Endure the "Heat"
- 4/5 Video Ministry Fosters Participation and Engagement in Celebration of the Mass
- 6 Benedictine College Youth Conference Photos/Ascension Parish Picnic
- 7 Parishioner Katrice Kern Reflects on the Sacrament of Confirmation and Her Faith Journey

*continued on back cover*

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## WINDOW 11: *St. John the Evangelist*

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

**S**t. John was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus. John is believed to be the longest living apostle and the only one not to die a martyr's death. John, along with his brother James and Peter, were alone privileged to be present at the Transfiguration, the raising of the daughter of Jairus and the agony in Gethsemane. John's own Gospel refers to him as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," the one who reclined next to Jesus at the Last Supper, and the one to whom Jesus gave the exquisite honor of caring for His mother, as John stood beneath the cross.

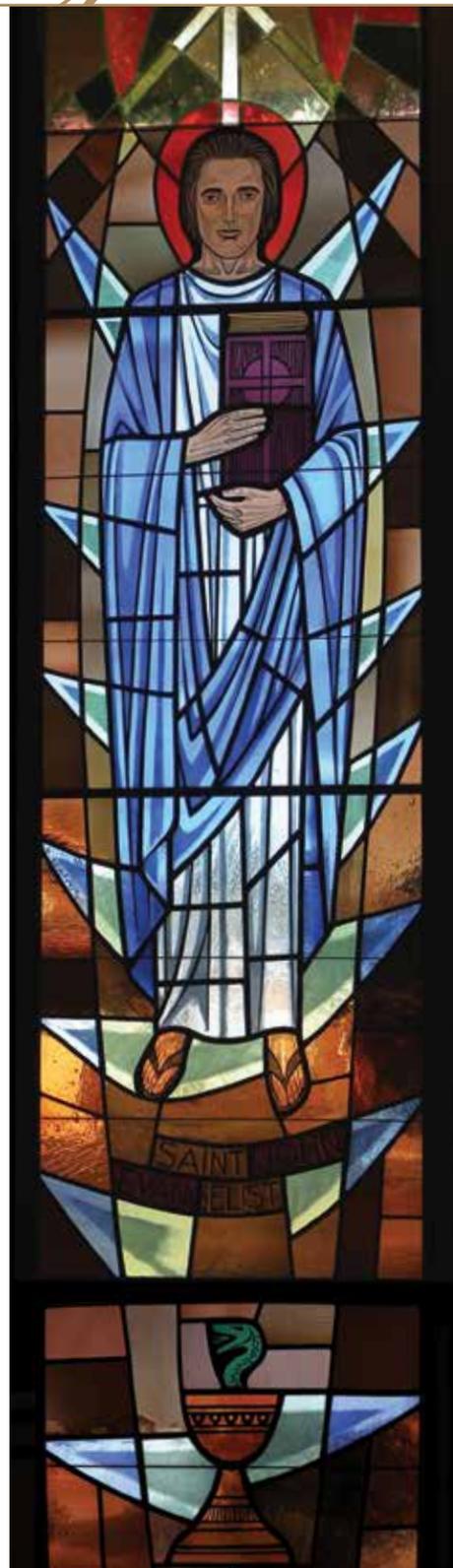
St. John was chosen in order to have one of the Gospel writers represented in the windows. John's Gospel contains a strong Eucharistic theme throughout. In fact, the symbol at the bottom of the window, the snake coming from the chalice, is a traditional symbol associated with John. The legend is that one time John was given a cup of wine that had been poisoned but that, by his blessing, the poison came out of it in the form of a snake and John drank the cup unharmed. In John's Gospel, Christ promises John and his brother, James, that they will both "drink of [His] cup."

From the "Bread of Life" discourse in John, we hear, "So Jesus said to them, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' So, they said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.' Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.'" (Jn 6:32-35)

As we know from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "the Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life... Daily conversion and penance find their source and nourishment in the Eucharist, for in it is made present the sacrifice of Christ which has reconciled us with God. Through the Eucharist those who live from the life of Christ are fed and strengthened" (CCC 1324, 1436).

When reflecting on this window of St. John, ask yourself, "What do I hunger for that has not been satisfied by my own efforts? Do I approach the Sacrament of the Eucharist with a pure heart? In what ways do I follow the directive at the end of Mass to 'glorify the Lord by your life?'"

Let us pray, "My Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that Thou art truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. I believe that in Holy Communion I shall receive Thy sacred body and Thy precious blood. My faith in Thy real presence in the Holy Eucharist is firmly founded on Thy word, O eternal Truth. My Saviour and my God, with the angels who surround Thy altar-throne, I bow down in humble adoration before Thy Majesty. Amen."



*A Letter From our Pastor*

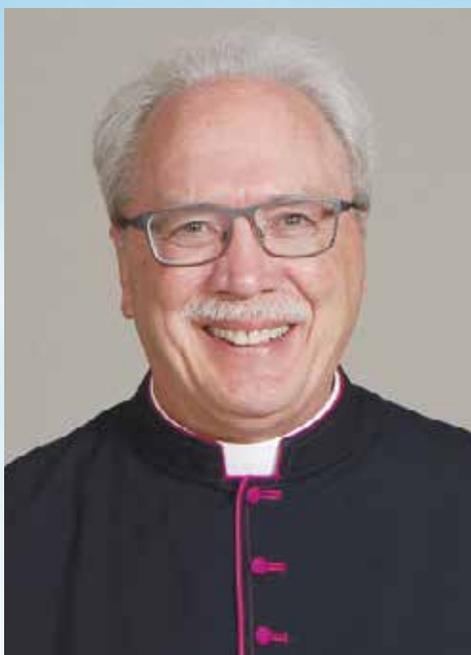
# Stewardship

## HELPS US ENDURE THE HEAT™

Dear Parishioners,

It is natural to think of July as a time for recharging. After all, isn't July the month most Americans would associate with the word "vacation"? Yes, Independence Day does provide a focus for the first part of the month, but then the rest of the month stretches ahead, seemingly empty of obligations for many of us.

The month of July also represents the relative sameness of a farmer's growing season. Like a farmer raising crops — having a busy spring planting season and a hectic fall harvest, with a long summer growing season in between — so it is with our lives. In our professional lives, completing our education, starting our careers, getting married, and beginning a family correspond with the planting season. Then, retirement, with the changes in our lives that come with it, is comparable to the harvest. But between the two lies 40 years of labor — for some people, these are years of exciting and fulfilling work, but for others, these are years of drudgery that seem to have no end. And just as the noonday sun of July shines the hottest, the "heat" of our working years



can become overwhelming.

The same is sometimes true of our spiritual life. Most of us don't remember our Christian beginnings because we were baptized as infants. But all you have to do is see the joy and excitement in the faces of those to come into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. Their spirits have been planted in the rich soil of grace from God and begin to sprout. The harvest we have to look forward to is eternal life with God in heaven. But between our Baptism and

our arrival at heaven, there are years of Christian living. For most of us, there are peaks and valleys, high points of joy and low points of sin, with long stretches of spiritual plateau in between. And that's when the "heat" of the noonday sun seems to weaken our resolve to live for Christ.

The best way to deal with that difficulty in the spiritual life is through the practice of stewardship. The commitments we make to devote some portion of our time, our talent, and our treasure to God guarantee that we come into contact with Him in regular worship and service. By maintaining our relationship with Him, we can grow in our trust in His love for us, so we do not need to fear "the scourge that lays waste" (Psalm 91) in the noon of our life's demands.

May God bless you and protect you this summer from all scourges, physical and spiritual. You'll be more prepared to experience His grace if you're at Mass each week.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten  
Pastor



# VIDEO MINISTRY

## FOSTERS PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN CELEBRATION OF THE MASS

**W**hen we are able to fully participate in Mass, we are coming together in a community to worship God — and this is the mission at Ascension Parish that calls us to proclaim the Gospel and build the Kingdom of God. To help fulfill this mission, the Video Ministry has been organized to foster our participation in Mass.

The computer slide presentations that are facilitated for Mass have the congregation's Mass responses and the lyrics for that day's music. The livestreaming camera was recently added to the ministry's set-up. The audio portion of the work involves being familiar enough with the sound system to be able to make adjustments during Mass to ministers' or musicians' microphones. Julie Ternes, Director of Music and Liturgy, puts the video slide presentations together.

"My role, as Director of Music and Liturgy, is to create the slides for each Mass or liturgy and to

provide an outline for the operators to follow," Julie says. "I recently also completed an instruction resource for new and existing ministers."

The Video Ministry encourages fuller participation in the Mass because the responses are readily available on the screen.

"People no longer have to have their eyes in a book, looking for a page or song number," Julie says. "Everything they need is at hand on the screens. When we project the words to the people's responses and songs, we are assisting everyone who comes to our liturgies to fully participate with us, in essence worshipping God and creating community."

The video operators offer their work as a gift of their time and talent, making their efforts part of parish stewardship.

"Some say, 'I come to Mass, anyway,'" Julie says. "But it really is a gift to our parish to come to

*continued on page 5*

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**— Julie Ternes, Director of Music and Liturgy**



# VIDEO MINISTRY *continued from page 4*

Mass and do this ministry. You are ‘gifting’ all who come the ability to participate fully.”

Brenda Muscha is one of the operators who runs the presentations for weekend Masses.

She was drawn to join the ministry when she realized it was something that enabled her to use her professional skills to benefit the parish.

“I wanted to do something that would get me involved in Mass every Sunday,” Brenda says. “With this ministry, you have an active role through the entire Mass and you certainly need to be paying attention to project the correct screen at the right time.”

Brenda's duties include displaying the slides on the projection screens and running the livestream equipment. The slides are all prepared in advance by Julie on a very user-friendly computer program. The operator starts the slide deck for the specific Mass on the computer. The operator then follows the order of the Mass, advancing through the various slides as Mass proceeds.

“The livestreaming portion is a little more forgiving because you simply start it and then primarily adjust the camera’s zoom and focus throughout the Mass,” Brenda says. “We have a separate remote control for the livestreaming, and Julie’s instructions for the Mass tell you which number to push on the control and when to do it.”

Although Brenda says operators do not need a lot of computer experience to serve in the ministry, she found it matches her interests and talents.

“I have worked as a computer programmer and system administrator for 38 years,” she says. “When this ministry came along at Ascension, I knew I had found something that I could embrace. I really enjoy this ministry. It keeps me focused during Mass. There is a beautiful cadence and rhythm to the Mass and I am grateful to be a part of it.”

New operators are most welcome in the ministry. Some are serving several Masses a month.

“It would be great to have more on our rosters, so everyone would only have to be on once a

month,” Julie says. “Basic computer knowledge is needed to run the program we use. It takes attentiveness to detail to put the slide presentation and livestreaming components together. I think all of our operators were able to easily add the livestreaming component.”



Anyone interesting in joining the Video Ministry may contact Julie Ternes or Rita Ritter at the parish office by calling 701-223-3606.

# Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

## SUMMER YOUTH TRIP



Eight of our young people traveled to the Benedictine College Youth Conference in Atchinson, Kan., in June. They had an amazing time! A big thank you to Chris Kraft, Director of Catechesis and Youth, for organizing this experience for our youth. We would also like to thank parishioner Jean Kraft, for chaperoning and driving the bus!

## ASCENSION PARISH PICNIC

WE ARE STILL ACCEPTING NEW DONATIONS FOR THE SILENT ACTION!  
DROP OFFS CAN BE MADE IN THE CHURCH ENTRANCE OR THE PARISH OFFICE.

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 21<sup>ST</sup>**  
**5:00-8:00 PM**

**FREE BURGERS & HOTDOGS**  
GRILLED BY KIRKWOOD BANK & TRUST  
**LARGE OUTDOOR TENT & SEATING INSIDE**  
**ICECREAM TRUCK & BOUNCE HOUSE**  
**BALLOON ANIMALS & FACE PAINTING**  
**CAKE WALK & SILENT AUCTION**  
**BINGO & FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!**

**BRING YOUR FAVORITE SIDE DISH TO SHARE!**

No time to shop or cook?  
Just come!



# PARISHIONER *Katrice Kern*

Reflects on the *SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION* and Her *FAITH JOURNEY*

“The best is yet to come” — these words are often heard with some of life’s major milestones, like the birth of a new baby, the first week of college, or a couple’s wedding day. It may come as a surprise, however, that this phrase also provides an apt description for the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Catholic Church. Indeed, far from signaling an “end” to a child’s formation in the faith, Confirmation is a Sacrament of Initiation encompassing the completion of baptismal promises, the reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the beginning of one’s full life in the Church.

Here at Ascension, our rising ninth-grade students will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation this fall. Parishioner Katrice Kern is looking forward to this milestone in her faith journey. Like her peers, she has been preparing for Confirmation over the past year.

“One of my favorite parts of the preparation was the retreat we had in March,” Katrice says. “The Faith Formation Director gave a talk on whether Jesus was Lord, liar, lunatic or legend, and went through detailing each of those things. It was really good. We also had some questions to go through with our sponsors and had a chance to talk with them.”

Katrice’s Confirmation sponsor is her cousin, Grace.

“I’ve always looked up to Grace,” she says. “She is nice and strong in her faith.”



*Katrice Kern looks forward to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation and continuing with an active faith life at Ascension.*

Traditionally, each of our Confirmandi also chooses a patron saint to help guide and inspire them on their faith journey. This ritual signifies the young person’s identity as a Christian and their place in the communion of saints. With a possible future nursing career in mind, Katrice chose St. Teresa of Calcutta, caretaker of the poor and sick, to be her patron saint.

As a teenager, Katrice understands how challenging it can be for today’s youth to turn away from daily distractions and make time for their faith.

“I think that the hardest thing for kids is deciding whether to go to Mass or not because sometimes

we get distracted with so many things,” she says. “It’s easy for us to skip out on praying. My family prays the Rosary every day, so that helps us stay on track. I’d say that everyone should always make time for Jesus because it will help in the future. You’ll just be glad that you stuck with Jesus throughout everything. Especially if you start when you’re little, then you’ll stay in the faith when you’re older.”

Though life as a student can certainly get busy, Katrice has always made time to participate in parish life as an altar server, fish fry volunteer, and with the hospitality ministry. She looks forward to receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation and continuing with an active faith life at Ascension.

“Confirmation will be a big step in the faith that helps us in the future,” she says. “I want to be active in the Church when I’m older, and if I have kids, I want to get them involved in the Church, too. I’m very thankful that I’m in the Church because it has opened my mind to so many things. You get to know God more and you grow deeper in the faith.”

Let us all rejoice in the Confirmation of Katrice and so many of our Ascension youth this fall! May the gifts of the Holy Spirit they receive through this sacrament inspire them to a deeper faith, a closer walk with Christ, and a full life in the Church.



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## The Parish Finance Council *continued from front cover*

Thankfully, parishioners have still been generous in their gifts.

“We were very close to budget, even during that time period,” Les says. “We’ve also received nice donations from wills and estates, which kept us ahead of any challenges.”

The costs for the recent upgrades to the siding, lighting, sound system, and patching on the parking lot were all managed by the Finance Council.

“We like to plan for things in advance,” Les says. “When you don’t have a plan, that’s not good management. We don’t believe in crisis management.”

For Les, being involved in the Finance Council is the essence of stewardship. He is using his skills to serve our Lord and parish.

“I love the camaraderie of this group,” Les says.

“I’ve done this kind of work all my life — it fits well in my skill set.

“Everything we do is based on the spirituality of the church,” he adds. “We want to run the programs in a way that the good Lord would be proud of us for.”

Finance Council members are appointed by Msgr. Braaten and can serve two consecutive three-year terms. Those with financial and accounting backgrounds are welcome to express their interest to serve on the council by contacting Beth Kathol at 701-223-3606.

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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.*