

Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Parish Faith Formation Program:

Guiding Our Youth on Their Journey with Christ

September 2021

Inside

It might be easy to assume that, as adults, we know more about the Catholic faith than our youth. But Faith Formation catechist Kim Hanson has found that this is not always the case.

“Sometimes, the youth make me look at something with a new perspective that I hadn’t thought of before,” Kim says.

Kim is also a parent of Faith Formation students. She knows firsthand how wonderful the Faith Formation program at Ascension is. Her son, Gabe, just received the Sacrament of Confirmation, and her son, Miles, is currently in the program. Her daughter, Charlotte, will be a student in the future.

“I just really appreciate the care they take with each child,” Kim says. “There are so many fun opportunities to grow in faith.”

In particular, Kim was impressed when Gabe would come home from Confirmation classes and have questions for her. Blane Schriock taught the classes, and Gabe learned so much — from the parts of the Mass to the teachings on heaven and hell.

“It was really neat to see a young adult so engaged and wanting to discuss the topics with me,” Kim says. “We would often talk about what he learned in class that evening. Talk to your kids after class and be open to learning new things.”



Kim Hanson with her husband, Erik, and their children, Gabe, Miles and Charlotte.

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Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

WINDOW 12: *Jesus Ascended*

THIS IS THE FINAL INSTALLMENT
IN OUR 12-PART SERIES.

This window is our parish feast day title and depicts Christ's ascension into Heaven 50 days after Easter and His mandate to His disciples to carry on His mission.

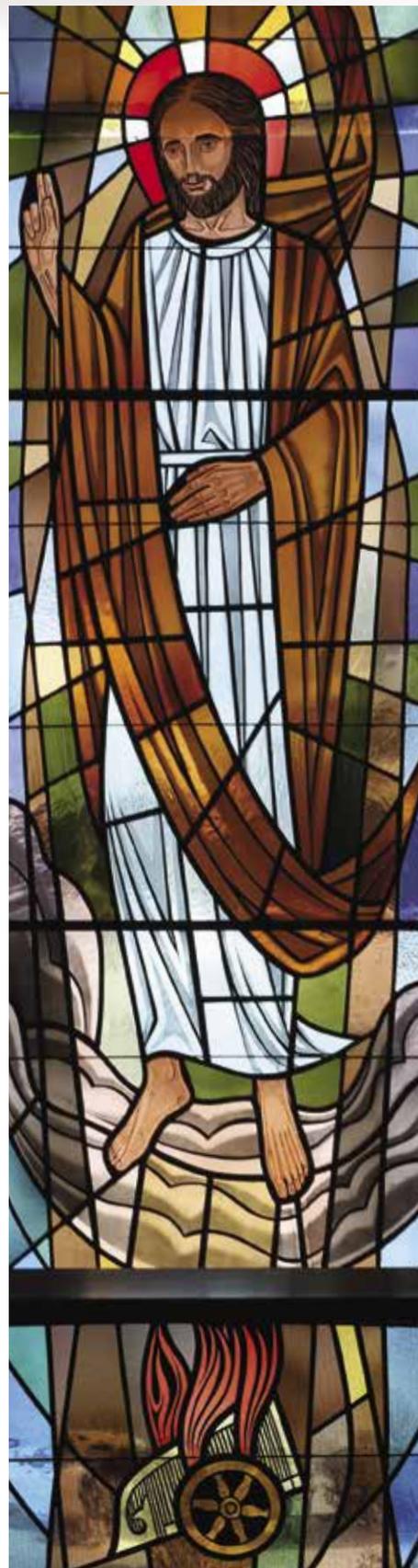
The Gospel of Matthew illustrates how the "disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them... Then Jesus approached and said to them, 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age'" (Matthew 28:16, 18-20).

In the book of Acts, Jesus imparts, "You will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight" (1:8-9). In the window, you can see the clouds beneath Jesus' feet.

The symbolism of the Chariot of Fire at the bottom of the window is also rich in symbolism. Chariots were often used in the Old Testament as symbols of the power, magnificence, and glory with which the Lord defeats His opponents and saves His children. For example, when the servant of the Prophet Elisha was filled with fear because of the Syrians coming to defeat Israel with their horses and chariots, Elisha asked the Lord that his eyes might be opened and a vision appeared of the mountain "full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:14-17). In giving a description of the coming of the Lord, the Prophet Isaiah wrote of His coming with "his chariots like a whirlwind" (Isaiah 66:15). The "whirlwind" is also depicted in the window with Jesus' cloak flying all around Him.

How appropriate that we are exploring this final window in our church amidst our annual Stewardship Appeal. As you gaze upon Christ's Ascension, ask yourself, "What 'mission' has God called me to at this time of my life? In what ways do I serve my parish community? What gifts has God blessed me with to build up His kingdom?"

If you are not familiar with our Parish Mission Statement, take time to truly reflect on what it means to be a member of our Parish: *As a people of God, of Ascension Catholic Parish, we are united by Baptism and committed to meeting the needs of our faith community. In union with the whole Church, we will build the Kingdom of God by proclaiming the Good News, worshiping God, creating community, and promoting social justice.*



A Letter from our Pastor

SEPTEMBER

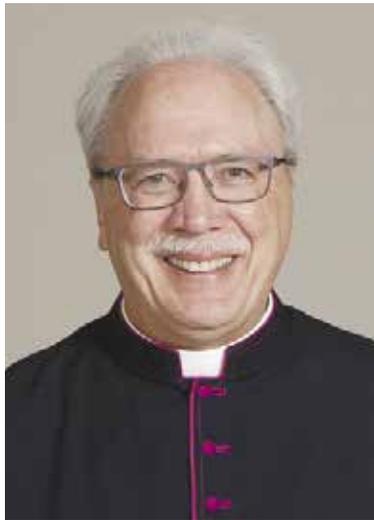
An Ongoing Opportunity to Change the World

Dear Parishioners,

In his letters, St. Paul often began by greeting his “brothers and sisters.” Every time I read one of these letters, it reminds me that you and I truly are sisters and brothers in the Body of Christ, the Church, but especially here in our parish. We need to understand that we are indeed a family, and the way we see and treat one another is fundamental to the health and happiness of this family.

Our spiritual family doesn’t stop at the walls of our church, but rather, extends to include every man and woman created in God’s image and likeness. You may be familiar with the term “Catholic Social Teaching,” part of which is built on a commitment to the poor. These are the beliefs that guide Catholics on how to apply the faith to all aspects of life, and they lay the framework for the Church’s teachings on the dignity and sacredness of human life. Once we make a commitment to be disciples of Jesus and pursue stewardship as a way of life, the principles of Catholic Social Teaching become very easy to incorporate into our lives.

Catholic Social Teaching has been around since those first followers of Jesus tried to balance their new faith with the realities of living in a world of Roman oppression. Jesus reminded His disciples then, just as He reminds us now, that caring for and administering to the poor should be at the core of all we do. Recall when the Lord said in Matthew, “For I was hungry and you



gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you gave me clothing; I was ill and you cared for me; I was in prison and you visited me.”

This is our foundation as we seek to embody mercy and justice to our fellow man and should be one of our major goals as a faith community. Many of our parish ministries provide for us an opportunity to do just as Jesus asked — to serve those most in need. As we

move into the fall season, with Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas soon to follow, now is a good time for us to recommit ourselves to addressing the needs we see around us — both as a parish society and as individuals.

I am proud of our collective efforts in assisting and serving the poor, but I also know that we can do more. Many of us personally need to get involved in these efforts. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has a great love and regard for the poor and, like Jesus, he reminds us often of what we need to do. Pope Francis once said in a homily, “The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty.” Together, we can make a difference.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Jim Braaten
Pastor

Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE WANGLER

When Patti Wangler's grandson was preparing to receive his First Holy Communion, she was right there at his side.

"I was his 'secret prayer partner,'" she says. "At one point, he told me his prayer partner had been giving him Catholic books, and I couldn't tell him it was me! I know he really enjoyed reading those books because his dad told me how appreciative and surprised he was when he received them. He was so happy with the religious trinkets I would give to him. I have also served as a prayer partner for other children over the years to help them keep Jesus in their life, and I would definitely do it again!"

Amazingly, this beautiful little story highlights just one of many ways that Patti and her husband, Al, live out the stewardship vision in their family and beyond. Day by day, they strive to embrace their vocation as Catholic parents of four and grandparents of seven (with another grandchild on the way). For example, whenever they have their grandchildren over for a meal, they make sure to invite Christ to the table as well.

"It is important to both of us that we teach our children and grandchildren to pray Grace Before Meals," Patti says. "They know we never eat without praying first. We look at the Last Supper picture as we fold our hands and pray. That is how both of us grew up — we never ate a meal without saying grace."

When Al and Patti's children were growing up, they worked hard to show them what it means to follow Christ.

"Our children were raised in this parish," Patti says. "Two of them were even married here, and two are still members here, along with three of our grandchildren. When we were raising our children, we made sure they helped out in the community and at the parish. For example, our



Patti Wangler and her husband, Al, strive to live out stewardship in their family and beyond everyday.

oldest son was an altar server, and we made sure that our children helped out with the St. Mary's Carnival."

Furthermore, the Wanglers have helped stewardship come to life by being faithful members of our parish for over 40 years. Patti enjoys helping serve funeral luncheons with other ladies from our parish, as well as calling people to bring salads and bars to the meal. She also taught catechism for a couple of years.

"I have truly enjoyed helping out with the luncheons along with the other ladies," Patti says. "We have a great team! Everyone is so easy to work with."

Patti is deeply dedicated to prayer as well, which she believes is a true lifeline in today's world.

"I am on the Ascension Prayer Line, and I also

FAMILY:

Living Out the Stewardship Vision

pray the Rosary every day,” she says. “There is such a need for prayer nowadays, and I have witnessed the power of it in my life. The Prayer Line is a great way for anyone to be involved in our parish, especially because it doesn’t necessarily take a lot of time.”

As members of the Hospitality Ministry, Al and Patti have grown close to our parish family in a special way. They appreciate the opportunity to serve as greeters and assist our parish priest and deacon with any needs that may come up before or during Mass.

“I have been a Hospitality Minister for over 30 years, and Patti has been one for about 30 years,” Al says. “I like being active in our parish. It is not that hard to help out. When you get involved, you get to know more people and it gives our parish a friendlier environment overall. We could always use more volunteers to help.”

Lastly, for many years, Al and Patti counted the money placed in the offering plate over the weekend. Al is no longer able to count due to the

schedule, but Patti still does.

By serving in various parish ministries, families like the Wanglers not only nurture their own spiritual and social lives but also strive to make our church the loving, joy-filled place that it is.

“When you volunteer, you help out the parish community, as well as your fellow parishioners,” Patti says. “I like that our parish is very friendly, welcoming, and family-oriented. We have belonged to Ascension for so long that we have gotten to know the other parishioners very well, and they have become good friends of ours.”

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— PATTI WANGLER



Patti assists with counting collection money for the parish.

Ascension

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Stewardship and Evangelization:

USING OUR TIME AND TALENTS TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

Jesus came to save the world and to draw all men to Him. When we think of the salvific work of Christ, many of us think of His life, death, resurrection, and His ascension into glory. And while those salvific events are of primary importance in salvation history, it doesn't end there.

Christ wants everyone to know the salvation He has won for them. He wants every soul to experience heavenly glory. Therefore, after having conquered death through His cross and resurrection, Christ commissioned His disciples to carry the Gospel to the world. They were charged to "preach the Gospel to all nations," winning, through their words and examples, souls for the kingdom! What a task! The disciples were overwhelmed at the thought of carrying the Gospel to all nations after Christ had returned to heaven. But the Lord assured them, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). When the Holy Spirit descended upon them on the feast of Pentecost, all those in the crowd were amazed. They all spoke in different tongues, preaching the same message, and everyone there could understand!

And so it was that the Church was established through the power of the Spirit and for the purpose of evangelization. Each of us has been baptized in that Spirit, and through that, made a member of the Church. It is, thus, up to each and every one of us to actively participate in the Church's mission — proclaiming the Good News to all the world and building up the Kingdom of God!

Each of us must re-evaluate how we are using the gifts God has given us to build up His Kingdom. Do we preach the Good News in all that we do and say? The same Spirit that descended upon the apostles that first Pentecost remains with us now, giving us the strength and courage to labor in the vineyard of the world.

Christ came to save the world, and He established the Church as the "universal sacrament of salvation" (*Christifideles Laici*, 2), by which many people throughout the world would know the glory of His truth. St. Paul describes the Church as one body with many parts. And just as each part of the body has a particular function, so each member of the Church has a particular calling, but united as one body in the Spirit, all of the members are to carry out the Church's one mission. How is God calling you to carry out this mission? What particular gifts has He given you with which you ought to build the Kingdom?

Each of us must re-evaluate how we are using the gifts God has given us to build up His Kingdom. Do we preach the Good News in all that we do and say? The same Spirit that descended upon the apostles that first Pentecost remains with us now, giving us the strength and courage to labor in the vineyard of the world.

Reflections on a Wonderful Summer 2021

By JOE SCHON, Seminarian

Hello, once again, to the parishioners at Ascension. As many may have noticed, I have not written to you since summer started. I decided to take a break from writing and anything academic for the summer. I now write to you to summarize my last three and a half months.

This summer, I and the three other seminarians who are studying in Washington, D.C. decided, along with our Vocations Director and Fr. Johnson, to stay together at The Pro-Cathedral of St. Mary in Bismarck. Here, we were able to live in community with each other and help out at the parish. We did a lot of work around the parish and helped serve every Mass. We were also able to work at St. Mary's Cemetery in order to earn some money during our break. I am very grateful to Fr. Johnson and the parishioners of St. Mary's for allowing us to live and to serve them this summer.

Along with helping out at St. Mary's, I stayed busy with many other events throughout the summer. At the beginning of the summer, I was able to join in the celebrations of the Diaconate and Priestly Ordinations. Ordinations are truly great experiences for all seminarians, as we get to participate in and see the joy of the newly ordained. Later in June, we had two seminarian events — the Seminarian Golf Tournament and the Big Smoke. In July, I had a family reunion and did various day trips in which I and others would hunt, fish, and do other activities.

During the second week of August, we had



our annual Seminarian Summer Gathering, and on Aug. 24, I will already be back in Washington, D.C. to start my second year of formation. Finally, throughout the whole summer, I and the other three seminarians living with me had many meals with our families and different parishioners in Bismarck. We all had a great time getting to know Bismarck and the people that we will, God-willing, serve in the future.

Overall, it has been a relaxing and joyful summer for me. I am very thankful to all of those who made this summer great for me and my brother seminarians. I would also like to thank all of you at Ascension for supporting and praying for me. Please keep me and all seminarians in your prayers as we start our next year of formation. I will be praying for you as well! God Bless!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, Sept. 1

Confirmation Parent Student Meetings: 7th at 6:30 p.m.; 8th at 7 p.m.; 9th at 7:30 p.m. in the Community Room

Friday, Sept. 3

First Friday Fellowship after the 8 a.m. Mass in the Community Room

Wednesday, Sept. 8

Catechist Workshop from 6-8 p.m. in the Community Room

Wednesday, Sept. 15

Opening Faith Formation Mass and Kickoff at 5:15 p.m. in the Church, followed by Dining in Faith potluck and open house



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Faith Formation continued from front cover

In addition, Kim is impressed with the Ascension community’s support of the Faith Formation program. Parishioners realize how important it is for our youth to learn the faith, to pave the way for a bright future at Ascension.

Kim teaches Faith Formation because she wants to support her children’s faith education. She has followed Gabe, and now Miles, through the years as their teacher. When Gabe finished seventh-grade classes, Kim jumped down to teach Miles.

“I went to Catholic school and a Catholic college,” Kim says. “But when you teach it, you open new

doors. Teaching forces you to learn.”

As both a teacher and a parent, Kim is impressed with — and grateful for — the Faith Formation program at Ascension. She feels blessed to play a part.

“I just love helping kids grow in faith,” she says. “It’s beautiful to be able to share the faith with youth at all places in their faith journey.”

Kim would encourage others to get involved, even if it’s just helping out periodically.

“What you put toward it, you get out of it,” she says. “And you are going to get a lot out of it!”

If you would like more information on Faith Formation at Ascension, or to get involved, please visit www.ascensionbismarck.org/children-youth-formation.

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.

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.