During the Children’s Liturgy of the Word, or CLW, our parish children learn how to bring their hearts to Jesus in creative, powerful ways.

“Every week we have ‘sorry time,’ which is when we ask the children to think of something they did this week that they want to ask God for-forgiveness for,” says Katherine Mackedanz, who recently began coordinating CLW at Our Lady of the Angels and St. Paul’s churches. “Often they say things like, ‘I hit my brother or sister,’ or ‘I didn’t listen to my parents,’ etc. This gives us a chance each week to reflect on past behaviors and to discuss ways we can improve, especially since God is always watching!”

CLW is offered from September through May during the 10 a.m. Mass at St. Paul’s in the chapel in the new addition, and during the 10:30 a.m. Mass at Our Lady of the Angels in the entryway. Children from pre-school-age up to children who have not yet received their First Holy Communion are encouraged to come to CLW. At St. Alexius it is offered at the 8:30 a.m. Mass in the church basement and it is open to children four years old through fourth grade.

“Any child who is able and willing to leave their parents seems to really enjoy the...”

continued on page 2
“Recently, we discussed the reading from Mark 10:17-25 which ends with, ‘It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.’ We discussed what it meant to be greedy and selfish and why God wants us to help others. The children had great ideas on ways they could help others, including providing food to those who don’t have any, giving away toys they no longer use, and helping older family members with chores.” — Katherine Mackedanz

Anyone interested in volunteering for CLW at St. Paul’s or Our Lady of the Angels should contact Katherine Mackedanz by phone or text at 612-418-9692, or email her at Katherine.mackedanz@gmail.com. For St. Alexius you should contact Christina Rousslang at 320-980-0475.
Stewardship Possibilities are Endless at Christmas

Dear Parishioners,

When I think of December, the first thing that comes to mind is Christmas. While that may seem to be the obvious topic, there really are a number of other possibilities. I could think of Advent, a season of preparation. I could think of the Immaculate Conception, as we celebrate God’s gift to the world in Mary. I could think of Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose popularity has spread far beyond the Hispanic community. Of course, December also holds the first day of winter. And because December marks the end of the civil year, I might be developing my resolutions for the New Year!

But instead, I think about Christmas. It is when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Babe in the manger in Bethlehem, who is the eternal Son of God made man.

The basic truth of Christmas — celebrating the birth of Jesus the Messiah, God Incarnate — is plenty of reason for us all to rejoice and worship. But we’ve piled such an additional load onto our Christmas observance that worship may be lost in the shuffle.

Think about what weight Christmas has to bear. We have to put up the decorations, or make travel plans to visit relatives. There is also the Christmas dinner to plan and cook. And then, we still have Christmas presents to buy. No wonder the Christ Mass becomes an afterthought!

Yet, we still have a wonderful opportunity this season — an opportunity to combine our Christmas activities with our stewardship commitments. Treasure, although challenging, is the simplest. Shouldn’t the most expensive Christmas present we give be the one to Jesus, Whose birthday we’re celebrating? Risen and glorified, He needs nothing we have. But His Body, the Church, continues Jesus’ mission here on earth and always needs additional resources.

Time and Talent may be a little more complicated, but can’t we spend a little more of our time in worship and prayer? Maybe you can attend Mass each day of the Christmas Octave. Have your family gather for prayers together in the morning or at dinner, in preparation for Christmas Day and through the Christmas season.

And there are so many opportunities to share our Talent! Sing in the choir for the Christmas Masses. Help decorate the Church. Cook or bake for someone who is shut-in. Invite someone who will be alone to share Christmas dinner with your family. Offer to work in a soup kitchen. The possibilities are endless.

With a little planning, we can make this hectic time one of real blessing both for ourselves and others. Pray for me that I can keep Christmas properly, and I’ll pray for you. And by the way, have a merry Christmas!

In our Father’s hands,

Fr. Greg Paffel
Though we tend to think of stewardship almost exclusively in terms of parish and community involvement, St. Paul’s parishioners Mara and Jay Kirckof offer a slightly different definition. For them, stewardship hinges around their understanding of their own vocation to the Sacrament of Marriage and their role as Catholic parents.

“God has given me this little garden of souls, as I like to think of it sometimes, and I’m here to tend it, to do the best that I can for them,” Mara says. “I think it’s very important to be active in your church — your parish — but also to grow that love within your own little domestic church.”

“It’s so important to live out stewardship within your family because that’s where it all starts,” Jay adds. “Being able to share and grow in my faith with my family, trying my best to strengthen them, and guiding them to living out their Catholic mission for God is my duty as a father. It is such a blessing and privilege to teach my children about the faith, and to see the growth of understanding begin to form in them at a young age.”

Mara and Jay have worked hard to make God the center of their family living throughout their marriage, and to constantly seek out ways to model and live out stewardship to their five young children. Yet, it wasn’t until their third child, Donovan, was born with a serious heart defect that they began to fully realize their own personal need for faith. Uncertain whether their child would even survive, they were brought to their knees like never before, permanently altering their family’s life.

“Suddenly our whole world just changed and we didn’t know if he was going to live or not,” Mara says. “All I could do was cling to my faith because everything just felt so out of control.”

While it was an experience that neither of them would have ever wished to go through, both Mara and Jay describe this time as pivotal in their family’s faith journey. It reminded them time and time again of God’s unconditional love, giving them a personal understanding of the lasting effect stewardship can have on others.

“The entire parish was really amazing, just covering us in prayer and support, going out of their way to show us their love and to remind us that they were here for us,” Mara says.

“All of the prayers, support, and financial help from this community was just truly a great witness on how God works through others, helping someone in need,” Jay adds.

Donovan’s health journey has also taught the entire family many invaluable lessons. They’ve gained a much deeper understanding of what it means to truly trust in God, witnessing firsthand how He brings beauty out of our pain. They have learned to see the
Meet Mara and Jay Kirckof
Parents in Family of Faith

“I think if you really try to lean on God and do His will, even if it doesn’t feel that way in the moment, He will always bring beauty out of the pain you are experiencing,” Mara says. “Our family has become so much stronger through this journey. To see my daughters and the compassion that they show to their brother, the maturity and genuine love that they have for him — and then, too, my younger children who have grown up never knowing anything different, I’m just really grateful that we’ve had that opportunity to grow that way.”

Grateful for their blessings, the Kirckofs continue to work hard to make time for their faith, despite the many demands of providing for five children. They faithfully maintain two holy hours, one shared between Mara and Jay, and the other attended by Mara and the five children. In addition, they volunteer as Natural Family Planning witnesses. Mara also homeschooled the children and is a member of the Prayer Chain. Jay, meanwhile, finds great enjoyment in helping each year with the Confirmation retreat as a small-group leader.

“It’s been great sharing my faith with the students, getting a chance to know them and being able to show young men that they are important to the Church — to remind them that Jesus was strong, bold and fearless in the pursuit of saving our souls, and how men of the Church need to replicate that to fulfill our missions that God has put us on the earth for,” Jay says.

Working to weave the faith into the fabric of their daily lives, Jay and Mara hope to instill a lasting love for God and His Church into their own children. And they are deeply grateful for St. Paul’s faith community for its support and encouragement as they live out this important vocation.

“Just as my own parents brought us to church every week day in and day out, it’s so encouraging to see other parishioners out there doing the same thing, to know that we’re not alone in this mission,” Mara says. “It just reinforces that faith is meant to be a way of life and helps remind me of the way I want to live for my family.”

“I think if you really try to lean on God and do His will, even if it doesn’t feel that way in the moment, He will always bring beauty out of the pain you are experiencing. Our family has become so much stronger through this journey.” — Mara Kirckof
It is not uncommon to give gifts during Advent and Christmas, but it is never enough just to leave it at that. True, Jesus gave Himself to us at the first Christmas. And, as always, we should strive to imitate Him by giving of ourselves in some way as we celebrate the anniversary of His birth. But there is a way to give even more than just ourselves — by giving the gift of Christ to others. The seasons of Advent and Christmas are perfect opportunities to share the love and message of Jesus with others in a beautiful way.

Of course, giving of ourselves in imitation of Jesus is a beautiful thing. But it is just as important to remember that, as human beings, we bear the likeness of God. As Christians, Jesus Himself inhabits our very souls. As Catholics, our Lord literally dwells within us when we receive Him in the Eucharist. Based upon this logic, we do so much more than imitate Jesus when we selflessly give of ourselves to others. Indeed, just as Mary carried Christ in her womb when she visited her cousin, Elizabeth, and just as she brought Him in her arms to Simeon as a newborn child, we can also literally bring Jesus Christ to the world. What a profound task Our Lord has laid out for us this season! As He grew in Mary’s womb, Jesus could only go where Mary chose to take Him. Of course, He couldn’t do anything — He couldn’t even speak. Mary became His hands and feet, and even His voice. Mary could have stayed at home during her pregnancy, resting and preparing for life with a newborn, as most mothers do. But instead, the Blessed Mother helped her Son begin His mission by bringing Him to her cousin, Elizabeth. Today, in much the same way, Christ invites us to share Him with the rest of the world. He chooses to make His presence known through us. And so, as the spiritual writer Caryll Houselander beautifully stated, “We must carry Jesus in our hearts wherever He wants us to go, and there are many places to which He may never go unless we take Him to them.”

How do we bring Jesus to those in our parish and community? There are many ways. We might visit with a sick parishioner over the holidays, providing fellowship and support in their time of need. We may consider serving a local soup kitchen or food bank, and doing our part to make sure that the hungry are fed. We can sing Christmas carols for our neighbors, bringing true joy and love to their homes. Perhaps we could help a tired friend clean her house, making her life a little bit easier during this busy season. Or we can share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. We might even try going to work with a cheery disposition, or donating money so that a starving child in a poor country can have something to eat. These are just a few examples of how we can practice stewardship.

We may sometimes feel as if our efforts are in vain — especially when it is hard to see the effects of our evangelization. This temptation is particularly strong when we offer our treasure as a gift to God. The positive effects of monetary gifts aren’t always as visible as gifts of time or talent. But when we give of our treasure, the love of Jesus can travel to places we could never go. While our gift may not directly affect someone in a positive way, it very well may enable someone else to do it for us. Sometimes, God doesn’t just ask us to be His hands and feet, but to enable someone else to be them, as well.

Advent and Christmas give us the opportunity to reflect on Jesus’ call to live as stewards and disciples of His Word. God has put us in a particular place, given us a certain amount of time, and asked us to perform particular tasks and selflessly share a portion of our gifts. This is all for a singular purpose — to bring His Son into the world, and make Christ’s presence just as real as when He first became man more than 2,000 years ago.
DEBI BÖSL SHARES HER STORY OF Encountering Christ AND Growing in Faith

Prior to experiencing her first Together Encountering Christ (TEC) weekend five years ago, Debi Bösl was initially resistant about attending. But with her daughter’s persistent encouragement, she decided to go.

“After that, I was like, ‘Wow, maybe there’s something more,’” Debi says.

Although the faith has always been a part of Debi’s life, something shifted in her heart after the retreat. Born and raised in a Catholic family in Long Prairie, Debi attended Catholic schools and had been a parishioner at Our Lady of the Angels for decades. Yet, she was practicing her faith primarily out of a sense of obligation.

“I’d think, ‘Oh gosh, it’s Sunday, I have to go to church now,’” Debi says. “But that TEC actually really changed me.”

Between hearing others’ stories of faith and receiving support and love from her children during the weekend, it was the beginning of something new.

“The thing that gave me the spark was my kids,” Debi says. “After TEC, I thought, ‘What else is there?’ It was like the Lord said, ‘Hey you should read your bulletin more.’ TEC was the start of a bigger plan and that really changed my life. I was just so hungry. I needed more. I couldn’t get enough.”

Soon after TEC, Debi began spending time praying in Eucharistic Adoration, which also impacted her relationship with God, deepening her prayer life and giving her the desire to attend daily Mass whenever possible.

“Adoration changed my life,” Debi says. “It just makes me feel so much more at peace.”

Today, Debi continues to grow. Despite her busy schedule as a nurse, wife of a dairy farmer and mother of five, she is involved with the Handmaids of the Lord, a group that focuses on intercessory prayer, as well as the Divine Mercy group. In addition, she has participated in Bible studies. She has been on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, The

Debi Bösl has been a parishioner at Our Lady of the Angels for 33 years and loves to serve others while growing in her understanding of the faith.
Mass Schedule
Saturday 4:00 p.m. - St. Paul’s
Saturday 5:00 p.m. - Our Lady of the Angels
Saturday 8:00 p.m. - St. Paul’s
Sunday 8:00 a.m. - St. Paul’s
Sunday 8:30 a.m. - St. Alexius
Sunday 10:00 a.m. - St. Paul’s
Sunday 10:30 a.m. - Our Lady of the Angels

Reconciliation Schedule
Thursday 4:00 p.m. - St. Paul’s
Saturday 3:00 p.m. - St. Paul’s
Saturday 4:00 p.m. - Our Lady of the Angels
Sunday 8:00 a.m. - St. Alexius

Debi Bösl Shares Her Story

National Shrine of the Divine Mercy, in Massachusetts and Marian conferences in Chicago.

“There’s so much to learn!” she says. “I just want to learn more and more.”

Growing closer to God has also led Debi to want to serve others and bring God to them in a variety of ways, including serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, serving with the No One Dies Alone Ministry, and praying for the young people of our parish.

“My appreciation of the Eucharist has increased so much from serving,” Debi says. “It’s pretty amazing that we can give Jesus to people.”

Debi encourages other parishioners to step out of their comfort zones and grow in their relationship with God, as well as others in the community, through service.

“Listen to your heart,” Debi says. “If you really want to find peace or happiness or why you’re here, in life, just take baby steps. You don’t have to do an hour of adoration, just go visit Him. Just be there for 15 minutes.

“Pray,” she adds. “Tell God what you’re looking for. If you want to know God more, or want happiness or less stress, He’s the one to talk to, because He can do all things.”

“Listen to your heart. If you really want to find peace or happiness or why you’re here, in life, just take baby steps. You don’t have to do an hour of adoration, just go visit Him. Just be there for 15 minutes.”

— Debi Bösl